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
SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

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

MEMBERS PRESENT

PAT AUGUSTINE
RICK BELLAVANCE, New England Fishery Management Council
CHESTER BREWER, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
PETER CHAIBONGSAI, The Billfish Foundation
MARCUS DRYMON, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant - State Rep for Alabama
AMY DUKES, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
MEAGAN DUNPHY-DALY, Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment
YAMITZA RODRIGUEZ FERRER, Puerto Rico DNER, Recreational and Sport Fisheries Division
SONJA FORDHAM, Shark Advocates International
KRISTIN FOSS, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
STEVE GETTO, American Bluefin Tuna Association
JOHN GRAVES, Virginia Institute of Marine Science
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, JR.
RUSSELL HUDSON, Directed Sustainable Fisheries, Inc.
BOB HUMPHREY, Sport-Ventures Charters and Casco Bay Bluefin Bonanza
STEPHEN IWICKI
DAVID KERSTETTER, Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center
TRISH MURPHY, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries
JEFF ODEN, F/V Sea Bound
TIM PICKETT, Lindgren-Pitman, Inc.
MICHAEL PIERDINOCK, CPF Charters "Perseverance"; Recreational Fishing Alliance
GEORGE PURMONT
MARK SAMPSON, Ocean City Charterboat Captains Association
MARTIN T. SCANLON, F/V Provider II
SCOTT TAYLOR, Dayboat Seafood
PERRY TRIAL, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
RICK WEBER, South Jersey Marina
ALAN WEISS, Blue Water Fishing Tackle Co.
KATIE WESTFALL, Environmental Defense Fund
ANGEL WILLEY, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

NOAA NMFS STAFF PRESENT
JANET COIT, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
HEATHER BAERTLEIN
RANDY BLANKINSHIP, Division Chief, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
KARYL BREWSTER-GEISZ, HQ Fish Branch Chief, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
CRAIG COCKRELL, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
PETE COOPER, Branch Chief, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
DAN CREAR, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
JENNIFER CUDNEY, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division

TOBEY CURTIS, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
GUY DUBECK, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
BEN DUFFIN, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
STEVE DURKEE, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
CLIFF HUTT, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
LAUREN LATCHFORD, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
BRAD MCHALE, Northeast Branch Chief, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
SARAH MCLAUGHLIN, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
IAN MILLER, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
DELISSE ORTIZ, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
RICK PEARSON, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
LARRY REDD, JR., Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
GEORGE SILVA, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
DIANNE STEPHAN, Policy Analyst
NICK VELSEBOER, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
TOM WARREN, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division
JACKIE WILSON, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Management Division

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

9:01 a.m.

MR. BROOKS: Good morning everyone. Bennett Brooks with the Consensus Building Institute here. Welcome back for Day 2 of the fall Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel meeting. Good to have everyone back in our virtual room.

I've talked to my internet gods last night and hopefully I will maintain much better connection today than I did yesterday but with speed.

Just to orient us to the game plan for today. This morning, in a minute, we will turn to the economic situation report. Something that the HMS Staff have been doing since COVID. There's been lots of prudent information, I think really broadly appreciated. So we'll have that this morning.

And after a break we will come back and we will hear from leadership. Both the new assistant administration and from Sam Rauch as well. That will be a very thick half hour so please come back from the break promptly because we will start right on time.

And then the rest of the day is pretty much Amendment 13. We are breaking that into three parts so that we can sort of have focused conversations on different aspects of A13.

Tom Warren will be leading us through that conversation. He's going to have a long day, but it will be an interesting day. And we are really looking for a very good conversation on that and lots of good feedback. That will be helpful for the HMS Staff.

We will have a break at 10:15. We will break for lunch from 12:00 to 1:30. We will have a break at 2:30. AP members, members of the public, if you need to make phone calls, do other work, those are the windows to aim for. So please use that as well.

And then for members of the public, we have designated from 3:30 to 4:00 for an opportunity for public comments. So that would be the time where if you want to weigh out any of the, any of the issues in our discussion, or frankly, any HMS related topic, that is your window.

So we invite you to listen to the conversation all day long and then weigh in at that point.

Ground rules. I don't want to hit all the ground rules other than to say, to AP Members, do like we were doing yesterday, weigh in, share time, ask questions. Those were very good conversations so thank you.

On the tech note, I think we're probably all fairly familiar with how this works at this point, but if you want to, the main thing to know is that you're all on mute and so to AP Members during the day or to public comment later, when you want to get in, just raise your virtual hand, which is clicking on the little smiley face at the bottom, which will bring up the dialogue box, and click raise hand. And then when you're done with your comment if you could lower your hand just by clicking on that again that would be great.

And for whatever reason that's not working, we have a Q&A box where you could say, hey, I want to get into the conversation. You can also use that Q&A box just post a question or a comment. Please know that those will be seen by everybody, so be aware of that.

And if you are participating by phone, you can raise a virtual hand by pushing *3. And then you will lower your virtual hand by pushing *3 again.

As we did yesterday, we will be recording the conversation today, so just be aware of that.

I think that's all I wanted to note right now. But let me just see, Randy, if there is anything you want to say at the outset here before we swift over to the economic situation report.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: I just want to wish everybody a happy good morning. It's good to have you all with us again for another, a full day of discussion on various topics here related to HMS. I'm looking forward to the dialogue. Thanks for being with us.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Okay, thanks. And, Pete, anything from a technical standpoint you want to fold in before we begin today?

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: No. I think we did

some mic tests. If you run into problems you can always email me or Craig, on the side, and we'll try to work that out.

MR. BROOKS: Great. And AP Members, if there are any questions that you have about the agenda today, or anything, this would be the moment to raise your hand. So I will pause for ten seconds just to see if anyone has any questions.

And if not, and I'm not seeing any, then, George Silva and Cliff Hutt, I'm going to hand it up to you to dive into economics.

MR. SILVA: Let me share my screen. And I assume that the slides are up, is that correct?

MR. BROOKS: We're seeing it. Yes, looks good.

MR. SILVA: Great. Thank you. Well thanks everyone for having me back. I can't believe this is already the fourth presentation of the economic situation report. Last in the spring.

I talked to folks about some of the green shoots that we were observing that were occurring in the economy. Unfortunately, some of those sprouts that we were taking a look at haven't fully yet emerged.

The emergence of the Delta variant continues to impact the economy. And there is quite a diversity of new issues that have come up.

We've worked in some of your recommendations from the previous meetings. I want to thank you for letting us know about your interest in bluefin tuna price variations.

More of a regional focus on some of the restaurant sales. And some more details about imports and exports.

So we've incorporated that into this presentation to help address many of those good comments that we received at the last spring AP meeting.

So let me start by walking you through what I'm going to talk about. I'm going to first start off, once again, with some macroeconomic indicators to give you the most kind of real-time look at what's going on in the fishery sector. In particular interest to HMS.

I'm going to dive into the HMS landings revenue by month that we've collected and analyzed. And then examine the individual price trends for some of our species.

Followed by a look at commercial vessel activity. That gives us a really very fine real-time look at what's going on, on the water, followed by international trade.

And Cliff Hutt will join us for a discussion of the for-hire sector tournaments.

Let's start by, my kind of canary in the coal mine, as I like to refer to the regional restaurant sales as provided by the open table network.

We've taken a look at this data since the beginning of the pandemic. It's been pretty useful to give us a, kind of a near real-time look at what's going on in the restaurant sector.

That's mainly because 68 percent of all consumer expenditures for fisheries products were made at food service establishments. That was provided to us by fisheries of the U.S. in 2017.

And I think that's still, for the most part, holds true. But there has been some changes since the pandemic in consumption.

As you can see here we've, you know, once again there was a dramatic reduction in seated diners in March of 2020, as shutdowns occurred across the country as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But then there was a recovery last summer to some degree. Though the winter things kind of took a turn for the worst. As you can see, we dropped down to almost, still an 80 percent reduction around the, just before the holidays.

And then that's slowly improved. And we saw some really good numbers starting in early April. People were excited to get back outside.

A lot of outdoor seating, some, many states reopened their restaurant establishments for in-person dining with the rollout of the vaccines that really took off in March. There was a pretty strong return to restaurants.

However, that did kind of take a dip. A couple, the data gets a little more choppy since then, as you can see. There is some up and down movements in April, May.

There's a big spike for Father's Day. Apparently everyone wanted to go out for Father's Day weekend, which is kind of interesting.

Memorial Day was a little bit of a mixed bag. That takes us through the summer. And we, kind of, there was kind of improvements all the way, I would say, up to almost July 4th. And then after July 4th there was a little bit of a slow down towards the tail end of July.

And then I wanted to give you kind of a real-time update. On Labor Day U.S. seated restaurant sales were up 15 percent. And the Sunday, this past Sunday, they were up 30 percent.

However, just on Tuesday of this week they were down 30 percent. So there's a lot of choppiness, a lot of change in, I think, consumer behavior.

The difference between maybe dining out when people went to work at the office versus now maybe some more concentration of dining out on weekends and holidays versus during the week day.

But I took a look at the seven day average to kind of smooth out some of this weekly, this kind of daily ups and down, as you can see in the data. But that pattern has become choppier.

Over the past seven days there's been a positive one percent improvement in seated table diners over the 2019 equivalent week. So that's pretty good. I mean, that's not bad. That's kind of on par.

But the previous week before Labor Day it was still off by nine percent, over 2019 numbers. So we're, there is a concerted push for recovery.

It's hard to tell though with the holiday week exactly what's going on, but my kind of impression now is that special occasions, like holidays and nice weather weekends, we do get some big surge in people trying to go out, but it's not steady throughout the week. That recovery.

So let me jump into regional restaurant sales. This is a new chart that I've put together.

In the last meeting we got some interest in more of an east coast focus. Kind of the HMS area.

So I took some select states that had sufficient data on the open table network. And this data I grabbed from Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, New Jersey and North Carolina. And I think that gives a fairly decent picture of what's going on in the east coast and the Gulf of Mexico.

And as you can see, there really was, everyone kind of took the same closure pattern in March. I mean, all the lines are very tightly on top of each other just before, or just leading up to that March 18th date. Really starting in like, I think it was March 14th and kind of leading into the March 18th.

Recovery and reopenings first took off in Texas and Florida, by that green line and that turquoise line on the map. On the chart I mean.

And then that was followed by in kind of like mid-May, around May 18th, North Carolina started reopening, I think, in restaurant visitation. And then kind of the low, the slowest ones to reopen was Massachusetts and then New Jersey.

It's interesting, the one interesting thing on that is that New Jersey was the last to start up in June 2020, but they had one of the largest rebounds leading up to Labor Day of 2020 over, look at kind of September, that purple line is right at the top. So there's a large rebound in New Jersey.

Massachusetts and North Carolina have had the slowest recovery so far of these five east coast states. So those are that orange line at the bottom there, as you can see leading into August. And light blue line in North Carolina. That's probably pretty much it.

The one thing they kind of note about this open table data is there have been a substantial number of permanent closures in restaurants, and that affects some of the data since kind of, they can't really recover to a restaurant that no longer exists.

And then there is also a bit more competition. There is a couple of competitors on the market that provide the same services as open table and that have really taken off during the pandemic. So I just want to put those caveats out there that we've been considering.

But so far it's still kind of, in terms of availability of data it gives us still one of the best real-time looks of what's going on in the restaurant sector.

A little bit slower source of data is the U.S. Census Bureau. They collect advance retail sales for different sectors.

In particular, I was interested in looking at the U.S. restaurant and bar sales. This is not just seated diners, but this also includes takeout and alcohol sales of bars.

As you can see here, the pandemic had a dramatic effect on restaurant and bar sales, with a 53 percent reduction at its lowest point in April of 2020. Thankfully things have looked a bit better, as I started talking about in the last AP meeting that there were some positive elements to keep an eye out for.

And as we can see in March of 2021 a change from 2019 monthly sales was at zero. So we're right back to 2019 levels in March of 2021.

And we've seen an improvement since then with almost a ten percent increase by the time we get to July of 2021. But the one thing to kind of note there is that that has an improvement in the sector.

Really the biggest improvement was in April with that five percent jump from zero to five percent. After that, and then there is a pretty good recovery also from April to May.

But after Memorial Day, really kind of saw slowdown of recovery over the summer months. With just a one percent increase monthly from May through June to July.

That maybe partially attributed to some of the hesitancy associated with the Delta variant. And also, with just kind of the economic turmoil in the economy and it's impacted our expenditures.

So switching gears from the restaurant sector. The other big kind of driver of fisheries expenditures, especially our recreational sector, is travel.

TSA provides some great real-time numbers on the number of travelers through the nation's airports that go through TSA checkpoints.

And as you can see here, the 2019 is kind of our baseline, it's in orange. And it's pretty, you know, it has a weekly up and down movement that spikes around various important holidays.

The green line shows us what happened in 2020, with that dramatic decline in March of 2020. And a real slow recovery from April through really July of 2020.

2021 has shown steady gains. Well, there was a dip after the New Year, but since the beginning of the new year through the early summer there was steady improvement on that blue line.

However, after you get past Memorial Day there is once again kind of this flattening of the improvement. And we're still well below the 2019 total traveler numbers. So that's something to keep an eye on in terms of our tourism sector.

Now we jump into kind of some of the key costs associated with the fishery and fuel costs. For a while fuel costs were kind of boring in this whole story.

2019 was our baseline, it's that black line on there. And this is weekly, number two, diesel retail prices that I got from the Department of Energy, on the graph there.

The one thing to note is that while the pandemic was going, the demand for fuel decreased. And that lead to a decrease in fuel prices throughout 2020. That green line there is well below the black line baseline for 2019.

Things started changing in 2021, the orange line. In January and February we're still that kind of decrease in demand for, diesel was still kind of, or for fuel in general, was still kind of there.

However, by the time we got to March and April there was an increase in prices. But the increase in prices was also associated with the increase of prices across the economy.

Consumer price index had pretty large gains during that time period. So it was some inflationary pressures on the economy.

And so then by the time we got to, I

would say mid-April, early April, we were basically at 2019 prices. And since the early summer, and kind of that, basically after June, fuel prices have kind of surpassed 2019 prices.

Recently, at the beginning of August, diesel was retailing at about $3.36 a gallon. I took a look more recently towards the end of August and it was still at, it had just climbed to $3.37. A penny more. So much hasn't changed since I put this slide together.

But fuel isn't the only issue. Actually, I'll probably pause here before I jump into employment.

A few other things have occurred as well, and I haven't found a great way to characterize it, but as you know, the supply chains have been disrupted in various ways. Personally I had a car repair this summer at the body shop and it took almost the entire summer to source parts and get that job taken care of. It's kind of amazing.

I'm hearing the same things occurring in the trucking sector. We're hearing that critical part of replacement is having an impact on our long-haul trucking.

I'm hearing a few anecdotes in our fishing fleet that boats have been kind of shored up to deal with repairs that have taken longer than normal. Parts that normally would have come in, in 24 to 48 hours are taking a week or two, maybe several weeks to arrive.

So those are all kind of concerning aspects that the pandemic and kind of the shifting economy has really had an impact. And one of the things contributing to that, in addition to like sourcing of parts, there is also some strange things going on in the labor market.

One of the big, dramatic things, is we saw uninsured unemployment claims hit some of the all-time, really all-time highs at 23.1 million on May 9th, 2020. Luckily claims have decreased to 28 million as of August 7th, 2021.

Unemployment has improved dramatically. It was at, at his highest rate in April at 14.8 percent. And it is now declined to 5.4 percent.

One thing to note of right now, as many unemployment benefit programs are ending, and this might have secondary consumption impacts on the economy that might affect how, the amount of cash some households that are still unemployed have available to spend on goods.

In addition, the unemployment numbers are really inconsistent from one sector to another. We've seen some sectors that are virtually unimpacted while other sectors, such as hospitality, had a major impact. Major shifts in unemployment.

And those are all having ripple effects on the economy. And I think that's contributing to some of the supply chain issues that we were witnessing.

So now kind of shifting gears from that macroeconomic overview and taking a look at how that feeds into our Atlantic HMS commercial landings. This chart you've seen. This is comparing 2019 to 2020.

Overall there was a 12 percent decrease on average of commercial landings from 2019 to 2020. I won't belabor this slide too long, but I wanted to get you updated on what's going on in 2021.

So I took a slice of that previous chart and added in the 2021 numbers from January through July that we have currently available. As you can see here, there was still a pretty large decrease in landings by value in January. With a 29 percent reduction.

And that's still way off our baseline of 2019. And really 2020. Because that was pre-pandemic.

February it was down 16 percent. March, in comparison to the baseline and in comparison to even to the start of the pandemic, we saw a nice recovery this year, really. A 56 percent increase.

The one thing to note there, while the 56 percent increase over the 2019 March numbers, it's just slightly above the February landings value. So in that aspect it is fairly consistent.

Really, January, February and March saw fairly consistent monthly HMS ex-vessel landings month-over-month. But compared to previous years, it's been kind of down and then back up.

April, that recovery continued. And actually, there was some real gains in April in the fishery overall. And there was a dramatic improvement, even compared to 2019, with that 71 percent increase.

So there was some very positive things occurring in the fishery in March and April. Unfortunately that's staled out in May.

In May we saw a 13 percent decline in HMS landings as compared to 2019. And it was down from April as well. It wasn't just a year-to-year comparison issue it was also a month-to-month decline.

In June, while landings revenue was down seven percent, it was still above May numbers, so that was good. In July we saw a pretty nice jump, I mean a really nice, a really dramatic jump, in landings.

But that's consistent with what we see in the HMS fishery. And it's very close to what the July 2019 numbers were.

So shifting gears. Let's kind of drill into some of the components that might be driving this improvement and landings value.

Prices for bluefin tuna have held steady in 2021. Ranging from $5.53 to almost $7.00 per pound in July.

Prices climbed above 2019 prices in, the preliminary numbers are showing for July here. That's the first time, really, that we're surpassing it.

Well, there was also a period in February and March too. But it's really kind of the first deviation. But we'll have to see how those numbers shake up when we get revisions to figures.

But here last time we had a question regarding the distribution of prices. So I decided to drill in and give you some more details on that.

And this next graph is going to be a little bit complicated. I'll run through it a couple of times just to give you an opportunity to look at all of the details and to give you an overview.

Here I will start by showing you this bluefin tuna ex-vessel price distribution. So what's going on in this chart here is ex-vessel price is on the horizontal, x-axis at the bottom. And as you can see it's, in January it was averaging, in 2021, around $6.43. That's kind of where that, the center of the mass is for that blue shaded area.

The orange shaded area shows you the kind of distribution of the ex-vessel price in 2019. And we've used this scale density.

Which basically means we just looked at kind of the distribution, the probability distribution of pricing for that month and scaled at the one to make them a little easier so all the charts were kind of the same size.

So let me walk you through that. As you can see here, in 2019, there was kind of a, almost a bimodal distribution of price. Some of it kind of around $4.50 versus about, I don't know, maybe it looks like about $7.50 peaking in 2019 where 2021 it's really centered around the mass around that six, a little over $6.00 mark.

But let me start this animation for you. And this animation goes over time. And so the next month is February. And you can see that the pricing is shifted to the right for 2021. So blue ray is a little bit shifted over.

April, however, saw kind of more of a peak and a mass. And then May we see kind of a much more diffused pricing in 2021 versus 2019, which 2019 is very centered around that. It looks around $4.50, most bluefin tuna we're going for.

And here's June, which shows a bimodal distribution 2021. And July we see that kind of shift to the right again where bluefin is definitely exceeding.

So let me just let it run one time just to have you take a look at all the price distribution over the different months.

One thing in the PDF we've produced for this slide presentation, each month is a separate slide. So if you want to kind of drill down drill and take a look at how each month plays out from January through July I would recommend downloading that PDF from our website. The advisory panel meeting.

So here we go again. Shifting in February. Basically the same distribution by shifted to the right.

March, a little bit different where it was, 2019 was bimodal. April, pretty dramatic difference.

May, lots more distribution in 2021. There's June, kind of that before pricing. There is July with that big shift to the right.

So that's probably, kind of takes us through bluefin tuna pricing. Hopefully that answers some of the questions that we had at that last meeting regarding that distribution.

So bigeye tuna prices. Bigeye started to exceed 2019, 2020 prices in March of 2021. That remains slightly higher through July. Most recent price being around $6.44 a pound.

Yellowfin prices started off lower in January and the previous years. But has exceeded 2019 and 2021. The 2020 prices since March. As right now it's, July was $4.47 (technical difficulties) --

MR. BROOKS: Hey, George, you're cutting out a little bit, can you just make sure you're staying close to your mic?

MR. SILVA: Yes, thank you, Bennett. I probably was leaning back in my chair a little bit. Thanks.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. No worries.

MR. SILVA: Let's see, where am I here. Swordfish. Swordfish prices have exceeded 2019 and 2020 prices in 2021. Except with the exception of May.

I guess there was a pretty strong pricing for swordfish last May, so it was a little bit higher last year than this year. But it's been pretty steady. It's kind of following a lot of the other consumer products in terms of improved pricing. And most recently at $5.16 per pound.

Blacktip, there was a great story in 2020 with it having a nice recovery in price for the meat of the shark. However, in 2021, since basically May, prices have dropped below 2020 levels and are, have dropped down to now just under $1.00 per pound in July.

So let's jump into our other high frequency data source that has been very helpful for looking at the pandemic's impacts, which is our VMS data. This slide here is a bar graph of the number of the VMS pre-landing reports.

And that tells us basically the number of trips for all landing HMS vessels equipped with VMS. As a reminder, VMS is required by vessels equipped with pelagic longline gear on board, bottom longline vessels fishing off South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia from January through July, gillnet vessels issued directed shark limited access permits near the southeast U.S. monitoring area from December through March 31st and for vessels.

So here we see the number of trips curiously have pretty dramatically declined in January and February of 2021. There was some pretty big impacts there.

Not sure if that were impacts associated with the crew or whatnot. Those impacts actually exceed the previous numbers for revenue and so, even though trips were down some of those offset with better landings with, or a higher volume of landings from the trips that were taken.

March, eight percent recovery in the number of trips taken. April, while April there were a bit more trips than March, it was still down as compared to 2019.

Same thing for May. May there were a few more trips than there were in April. But it was still off by 25 percent as compared to 2019.

June, the story is almost the exact same pattern as in May. Except a few more trips. July, unfortunately, we did see a decline in the number of trips overall, both from June to July. And as compared to 2019. Which was off by 18 percent.

Now we also, from the pelagic longline vessels, we get the number of set reports taken by each vessel. So this gives us a measure of effort of the longline fleet, in particular.

Somewhat similar patterns. Effort was down 29 percent as compared to 2019 in January. February effort was down 36 percent. March, there was still a nice recovery of a increase of three percent in effort.

And that increase continued in April. It really dramatically improved from 2020. But it was, and it was above March 2021 numbers as well.

May was just a tiny bit more effort

than in April, but it was dramatically off from what we normally see in May as compared to like, in comparison to 2019 it was down 43 percent.

In June that kind of story continues. It was, June was up a bit from May but still down as compared to 2019. Down 18 percent.

In July though the effort was off a bit overall, both from June and, from June in 2021. And is in comparison to both 2019 and 2021 numbers. 2019 and 2020 numbers. It was down 35 percent.

So, there was a lot of interests in the last meeting about HMS trade data. And I thought most of the interest would be focused on imports of HMS species products. It was an overall decrease in 2020 as compared to 2019 in imports.

Some of you mentioned in previous meetings, with passenger air travel down, there was also a major impact on air travel, or freight, air freight, associate with the travel restrictions that had an impact on imports. And a few other contributing factors. And just demand was probably off overall internationally because of the economic distribution.

As you can see here, bluefin was down dramatically from basically 2,500 metric tons down to 1,700 metric tons in 2020. Bigeye was also down equally from about, just under 5,000 metric tons to a bit under, or down to about 1,900 metric tons in 2020.

Yellowfin, percentage wise, wasn't down quite as much imports from 19,700 down to like 14,600 in 2020. And then as you can see, albacore, skipjack was small amounts of imports.

Swordfish probably the most interests. We had about 10,456 metric tons imported in 2019 and 8,163 metric tons in 2020.

One thing to keep in mind is that these imports are from all oceans. So they're not just fish from the Atlantic, they're from the Pacific and they're from all countries. I just wanted to caveat that.

We get this data from the U.S. Census. Their customs and boarder protection numbers that come in.

I did kind of anticipate a question that you might have. So what's going on in 2021.

I had to do some hand calculations because we're still only about halfway through the year, so I took a look at the first six months of 2021 data.

It's not up here on the slide but I did do some quick math earlier this week to kind of have that, those questions answered. So taking a look at swordfish.

Swordfish in the first six months of 2021 was off 20 percent as compared to 2019, in terms of the amount of metric tons of imports. That's kind of in comparison to the first half of 2020. The first half of 2020 was down 38 percent.

So, I mean, there is a bit more imports coming in now in comparison to 2020, but overall, still, it's still down 20 percent for this first half of the year.

Bluefin, this story is a little different. Bluefin tuna is, imports are up 27 percent over the first six months of 2021. Based on 2019 to 2021, the first half of the year.

And that's different than it was in 2020 for the first half of the year. In 2020 those imports were down 34 percent as compared to 2019. So that was kind of a change over there.

Albacore is up, imports are up ten percent in the first half of this year. Yellowfin imports are still six percent lower in 2021 versus 2019 for the first six months.

And that's a bit, that's quite a bit different than it was in the first half of 2020. The first half of 2020 it was down 32 percent.

Then some increase in yellowfin imports from 2020 to 2021. But it's still not fully up to the, what the levels were in 2019.

And bigeye, bigeye had a 55 percent reduction in imports in the first six months of 2021 as compared to 2019.

So that kind of takes us through all the kind of nitty gritty commercial economic numbers here. I can move on to the next slide.

And this will be the spot where I transition to Cliff Hutt. And he will walk us through our recreational fisheries information.

MR. HUTT: Thank you, George. I am Cliff Hutt, I'm with the HMS division.

More recreational data experts, and today I'm going to walk you through some data we have based on recreational fishing effort where I'll be comparing some baseline data from 2015 through 2019 to what we saw last year in 2020 and what we're seeing so far this year in 2021.

Since we really only have data for the first half of 2021 at this point, we're just going to be looking at data from the first half of the previous years as well.

We'll start off with some of the MRIP data in the southeast. Here we have MRIP trip effort data for the south Atlantic for the for-hire fleet. As you, most of you will be aware, MRIP data is presented in two months. So we have January/February, March/April and May/June data.

The first bar in each of those groups, that kind of blueish green is that average of 2015 through 2019. The green is 2020, the purple is 2021. And the percent change is a comparison to that baseline from '15 through '19.

As you can see from this graph, we saw a dip in for-hire effort in 2020 following the start of the pandemic. And that really rebounded pretty well by wave three as people were kind of figuring out that outdoor activities were, say for alternative, during the pandemic.

And for waves one and three we've basically seen data, the effort and the for-hire fleet in the south Atlantic kind of returning slightly back to normal. But we saw this huge spike in March and April of 2021.

However, this number is kind of on par to what we normally see in wave three. I think maybe reflective of just kind of an early arrival of some of the HMS species that are targeted by this fleet.

Because these numbers, to be clear, these are trips that either were targeting or caught HMS. So, I think the big spike we saw March/April this year was just a result of the fish kind of showing up a bit early, which we've been seeing all up and down the coast the last couple of years.

Next slide, George. And here for the south Atlantic we have the private boat effort data. Basically what we see here in 2020, we saw initial decline in effort in March, when the pandemic got started. With it largely returning to normal in May/June.

And what we're seeing now for 2021 is the pattern, the effort pattern, for the private boat fleet in the south Atlantic basically returning to normal as reflected on the 2015 to 2019 baseline.

Slight increases in waves one and two, but they're kind of within the range in variability that we expect for the periods of the year.

Next slide, George. Now we go to the Gulf of Mexico, which for MRIP data is basically from Mississippi through the Florida Keys.

Here, again, what we saw last year, we had a good spike last January and February in for-hire effort in the Gulf of Mexico compared to the baseline. And then when the pandemic started effort, you know, for-hire effort in the Gulf just completely kind of crashed.

A lot of that effort in the Gulf HMS suffered is kind of driven out of the Florida Keys. And the Keys really shutdown hard in those early months in the pandemic. So you just saw kind of a puddle cessation of for-hire effort down there. And what we're seeing now this year is that for-hire effort largely returning back to normal.

Next slide, George. The numbers are really kind of weird this year are the private boat effort in the Gulf of Mexico.

They were really down in January and February. A huge spike up in March/April. And then kind of coming back down in May/June.

Hard to say what all of this is being driven by. I do know March/April is largely driven by an odd yellowfin tuna spike out of Mississippi of all places. We had an estimate of roughly, just almost 17,000 yellowfin tuna caught in wave two out in Mississippi this year.

It seems to be an emerging fishery. We first started seeing some fish caught out of there in 2019. Came up a little last year in 2020, and just a huge spike this year.

And not entirely sure what's going on there, but if anybody on the panel has any insight on that love to hear it.

But a lot of this I think is just reflective of the fact that the private boat effort and catch data out of the Gulf of Mexico is some of the most variable recreational effort we have for the HMS fleet given, which has largely been the case since Louisiana pulled out of MRIP to create its own survey on krill.

Next slide, George. Now we go to the LPS data. At this time all we have is data for the month of June. General note, the LPS ran through October and covers the New England and Atlantic states.

Looking at charter boat effort in the month of June, now, again, we have that baseline data of the 2015 to '19 average. 2020 data and 2021 data.

During the pandemic, in most states, we actually saw, by the month of June, we saw a slight increase in most states. In the for-hire effort with big increases in Maryland and Delaware where the effort nearly tripled last year.

In the case of Maryland and Delaware, the effort is still up compared to the baseline, but it's kind of come back down to earth. And again, the other states we're seeing it kind of returning closer to the baseline. Some places down a little, some places up a little but kind of within the range of the variability.

Next slide, George. And then for the private boat effort, kind of largely seeing the same thing. In most states the effort kind of returning back to closer than normal.

Seeing, again, in private both effort, another big spike in Maryland and Delaware. Even higher than last year, although the spike last year in the private boat effort was not near as great as it was in for-hire effort.

I think a lot of this is, for Maryland and Delaware, just being driven by an early bluefin tuna bite. Tuna bite kind of in the area where we're seeing them showing up earlier every year as we have in the past.

Next slide, George. And here we have the tournaments. For the year 2021 we are still down, compared to 2019 and 2020 we had 47 fewer registered tournaments through the month of September.

And this year that number is still down, but it's only 26 fewer tournaments. We've seen a lot of them come back, but not all of them yet. And this is probably reflective of continued issues with the Delta variant, but we are seeing some recovery in terms of turn at registrations. Throughout most of the region.

And with that, that's kind of the end of the presentation here. This is a list of various covered resources from NMFS and the U.S. Government. And George and I are happy to answer any questions you might have.

MR. BROOKS: Great. George and Cliff, thank you both so much. Always, this is always a fascination presentation. And I know it's really valuable for everyone, so thank you on behalf of the whole AP.

We are at ten of. We have until, we've got about 25 minutes for some Q&A. We will have a hard stop at 10:15 because I do want to give us our break before the leadership update, which will start at 10:30.

So, AP Members, please raise your hands so we can see who would like to enter this conversation with questions or comments. And just so we can, you know, and I really ask people to be as focused on your comment. And George and Cliff, as focused in your responses as possible so we just get a lot of people into the next.

So I see Marty Scanlon, your hand is up. Let's bring you into the mix.

MR. SCANLON: Thank you for the presentation. One of the major factors with the decrease in trips, and effort, is the lack of crew. That's been a major, major issue throughout the year, throughout the beginning of the pandemic has been just impossible to deal with. If you go by numbers, you would think I retired this year.

The other thing here is, one question I have for you, is there any data on restaurants that are permanently closed and how many restaurants reopened to that time frame would be interesting to see. So to see what the potential to rebound is, you know, that might be of help.

And the other thing is, with the less trips and the less sets per trip being made, that is one of the results of the higher prices, less product on the market.

And on top of just having the lack of crew, when we do windup with crew they're inexperienced and we're not able to fish the same amount of gear that we would normally fish. Nor are we capable of fishing in the amount of weather we normally fish. Throw all of those factors in there.

As far as your numbers in May are concerned, one of the main docks that we packed out in Beaufort, North Carolina almost closed to commercial packing this past winter. So that really limited the access to the fleet too to troll the bump area when it reopened up in May. So those are all factors that you can look at there in the future here.

MR. SILVA: Thanks, Marty. Yes, appreciate the feedback on your experience with crew issues.

I think in terms of reopening up the restaurants, I'll take a look for a good source for that. I don't have one handy at the moment in terms of businesses closing and opening. Probably more of a industry association type of data point that I could track down. But I'll take a look at that.

MR. SCANLON: That would be helpful to drop by is too, to see how many of them actually permanently, are considered permanently closed. And how many, what percentage of new restaurants have opened in the meantime to replace that. That would be a really important number there for them to look at.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Marty. Scott Taylor.

MR. TAYLOR: Just a couple of other things that I want to add around the alliance of Mark and Doug. I don't want to echo, just kind of majorly problematic through Wisconsin for us. And you can forget experience there.

There was a couple of things that would have been nice to have seen in the economic data. Like a comparison between the domestic production x value or even in just pounds versus the import to see how that overall trend is going to look.

And the other thing is that it would have been nice to have seen how many inactive vessels. What the trend is like with that.

Because what's happening here, and what should be really concerning to everybody, is the overall general trend of decline in both effort and in sets. And that's attributable to just attrition. And no new recruiting coming back into the industry.

We've had some people pass away this year. I just don't know if anybody, offhand, that's new that's coming into the industry.

And my fear is, at least from our perspectives, that you're on the test because of a crash. I know for a fact that there is no boats, no U.S. boats, so they're going to be out on Havana Banks this year. Or none that I'm aware of in any kind of numbers.

We haven't seen obviously swordfish product yet in terms of the U.S. fleet. But these numbers need to be a wake up from the, if we don't get standard level of support for the revitalization, at some point the trends will just fall off the cliff.

So, again, if we did this economic data moving forward it would be nice to see domestic production against that relative, whether or not it's being filled by the imports.

Clearly with the lower amount of enforce, we do see some increase in pricing. But as Marty stated, the number in sense, the number of effort happens to be distributed across the individual boats.

It's just no longer a sustainable model for us. Especially when you got the McDonald's paying $15.50 an hour for labor. So, really, really concerning for us. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott. George or Cliff, any comments there before I go to the next speaker here?

MR. SILVA: I think the only comment I'd have is, we probably can work in the number of active vessels over time for the next presentation.

And we'll take a look at that import versus domestic production number. It's a little trickier because we'd probably have to factor in the west coast and pacific production numbers into that from the domestic side. But we'll take a look at our means for doing that.

MS. BRENNER: Thanks. Let's go to Dewey, than Jeff Oden and Alan Weiss. Dewey.

MR. HEMLIRIGHT: Can you hear me?

MR. BROOKS: Your mic should be open, Dewey. Yes, we got you.

MR. HEMLIRIGHT: Okay. Yes, a couple of things for this would be very helpful to get a 100 foot level instead of a 30,000 foot level, would be to look at the amount of hooks, that the decrease in amount of hooks that have been set by pelagic longline. And that would give you a better idea to focus on versus the VMS and the different ones that got to use VMS.

Second of all, how about looking at, with gassed tuna. Which is a process where they gas the tuna with the treatment and we have to compete against it with our fresh things. Some way to figure that. I mean, millions of pounds are imported not the U.S. for that matter.

And another thing to look at with the imports is, look at the customs, where it has to clear customs at, along the east coast or Miami to see where that seafood is coming into. And from the different customs offices up and down, particularly to the east coast you can get some assumptions.

But we really need a standardization of the active vessels and not just one swordfish in a six month time period. Including active vessel.

Because what Scott said is, he is 100 percent on, we are getting, the industry is getting pushed right to the edge of a cliff. No pun intended there, Cliff.

But we're getting right to the edge. And you all have the data available at your hands already to show that 100 foot level versus this 30,000 over foot view.

And so that would be very helpful. Particularly in any case of revitalization of the pelagic longline, which seems to be a mantra that I've heard for ten or 15 years now. And so, anything closer of a spectacle to getting down there of reality would be very helpful. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Alan Weiss and then Jeff Oden. Alan, your line is open.

MR. WEISS: You have a slide that showed ex-vessel landings and aggregate. And I guess along the lines of what Dewey said, it's interesting information but there is limits to really what you can draw from it.

You have separate slides showing numbers of trips and sets over time. You have other slides showing ex-vessel prices. The initial one I mentioned was the one that shows the aggregate ex-vessel value.

It would be good to be able to, and I'm not sure, I don't have a ready suggestion for you, but some way to synthesis this stuff so that you have a clearer idea of what the trends are for an individual boat, other things held constant.

Because when you're looking at these various aggregations separately, it's hard to tell if the landings are down because the effort is down or the landing, or the value is down because the landings are down or because the prices are down. It's hard to bring it all together and know exactly what the impacts are at a constant level of participation of the boats that are involved in the fishery on an ongoing basis over time.

Additionally, and this is a separate matter, and this is something you haven't covered, and I don't know if you have data on it or not, but I'm in the longline gear supply business and I can tell you, you look at the fuel cost input, which is important, that's really probably the largest extent, but this year all the sudden the cost of a number of items in the area of fishing gear have just gone through the roof.

And it's mostly items that are, have plastic components, or are made of plastic entirely. Floats, buoys, tools that have plastic handles. And of course, monofilament fishing line.

So, a lot of prices, a lot of input costs have gone up. Which they've gone up enough to have significant impacts, I think, on the profitability.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Alan. It's all interesting you said here.

Let's go to Jeff, and then let's bring in Rick Weber. So, Jeff Oden. Jeff, your line hasn't been open yet. There you go.

MR. ODEN: Okay, thanks. Anyway, I see the trends and ironically I find my home port being one of the exceptions.

I'm seeing six new captains in my area. And a couple of boats have sold, but a couple of have been, they have been replaced and a couple more bought.

And anyway, I see optimism. And then again, I really ask myself, when I look and see the trends in other areas, how much is NMFS to blame for that. I mean, with what people see coming with A13, it really has taken the wind out of a lot of people's sails.

And I mean, if they have no place to go for closure, which I know that's the discussion ahead, I mean, you truly have to ask yourself, how much are you all responsible for where this industry is heading. And I'll save the rest for later.

But I do see optimism in my area. And I'm proud to say that I see it here. I sure hope you all allow it to continue. And, anyway, we're a valuable entity within the HMS. The most valuable I might comment.

And anyway, I'll save the rest for later. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jeff. Rick Weber, why don't you jump in.

MR. WEBER: George, on big picture things, I'm not sure I agree that TSA, though I understand it's good and quick and easy data to grab, I'm not sure it's a great proxy for recreational effort.

There are some sources. Soundings Trade Only, the magazine, but they normally publish an index of boats sales. And they'll frequently break it up by category. And that might something you look at for health of the recreational boating market.

I believe their publishing data that comes from either Yacht World or boats.com. Is what they're publishing. But that's at least a source for you.

Or perhaps if the likes of Expedia or Airbnb will tell you about shore side rentals. If they break it down. The people, the number of people who are moving towards waterfront hospitality might also be a better proxy for you than the number of people that are flying. Just as an idea.

Other than that, I always really appreciate this presentation. And I know I was supposed to bring in the rec voice, but the decrease in longline/VMS vessel trips needs to be disconcerting to leadership.

That there is something there and we do not want to replace it nationally with more imports. We know that that is worse for the oceans at-large is to replace U.S. caught fish with imported fish.

So, just a word of support to those folks. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Rick. Tim Pickett. You're open, Tim.

MR. PICKETT: Pandemic. In terms of, we're talking about imports and exports and things like that.

And the importance of having a domestic fishery, I was approached by several different, smaller countries. Island nations in the Caribbean towards the end of this pandemic that really, I mean, got caught with their pants down.

Their nations, they important everything, they're used to importing everything. And they had no way to feed their people when everything was locked down. There was no commercial, viable commercial fishery in these countries.

And I think it kind of, you know, this might be a wake up call, might be a call to action that we really need to support these domestic fisheries so they don't go away like Scott is saying and everything.

It's important on a national level, just for food security in case something like this ever happens again, we can beat ourselves. You know, no planes coming in, no imports.

We have the ability in the area and the people and the knowledge on how to do this. I just thought it was very interesting that it was two different island nations that approached me and said, hey, we're going to get some government money in here and everything to promote our domestic commercial fishery because we can't feed our people if it ever gets locked down again. So I just figured I'd throw that perspective out.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tim. Marty, your hand is up, I don't know if that's leftover or whether you want to get back in the queue?

MR. SCANLON: I want to jump in here if can, Bennett, that Jeff said and that Dewey said, if I can, is that okay?

MR. BROOKS: Yes. Go ahead, Marty.

MR. SCANLON: Well, when you talk about coastal fisheries and you look at what Jeff has just stated to us that that's the one region in the country that has had an increase in captains and a recruitment in captains and an increase in vessels, it doesn't get more coastal than that particular area.

Even though the inlet is bad to navigate, it's as coastal as it gets. You can leave the dock in the morning and we can return to the dock at the end of each day when you get down hauling at the end of a short trip. You can work in-between the weather.

And it's a point that Scott Taylor has made. It is one of the reasons why it's important for us to gain access, regain access to the bump area, and to that northern Florida area if we're going to keep this industry going.

That's the way this fishery is being led. That's the economic viability of the industry is for these small coastal vessels to be able to operate in and out of these ports more safely and more able to recruit crews that are qualified to work on these vessels. So that's a prime example of why we need those, need access to those other areas.

The other thing I wanted to point out is, that Dewey brought up on gassed tuna fish and gassed fish, this country is one of the few countries in the world that allows gassed fish to be sold. China has banned it. The European Union has banned it.

And why this country is subjecting its population to the dangers of gas tuna fish is beyond this. And we've worked on this topic, Blue Water has, over the last several years.

And we really never got any, we've never gotten any results out of it there but it's a really important issue, I think, that we need to address in moving forward. This gassed tuna issue.

Because what it does is it masks the quality of the fish. You can actually turn bad fish and make it look just fine by gassing the appearance of it there. It's amazing what that will do. And it's almost like a magic act.

So, I just wanted to add that in there. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks, Marty. And I'll note that in the Q&A Wallace Jenkins has weighed in saying, I agree with what Rick Weber just said in reference to imports versus domestically harvested. These imports are not sustainable harvested, not to mention thereby catch. So thanks for replying with that Wallace.

I don't think I see anyone else in the queue right now. I'll just note, a number of kind of specific suggests and things like Cliff and George, when you come back to the next meeting, things to be thinking about.

Taking a closer look at that restaurants and sort of what's permanently closed, new ones coming on, see what's happening there.

Looking at hooks, the pelagic longlines, fishery. Rick Weber suggested a couple of different ways that you might get another look at what's going on in the rec world from both sounds, by type, shore side rentals. That that might be a better proxy for the recreational fishery than air travel.

And as well as short of looking at this import versus domestic production. Seeing if we can get a finer look at that.

And then more broadly, a number of people weighing in on big picture trends in the pelagic longline fishery. Just being a lot of concerns there and a lot of trouble. Ways to address that.

And then lastly, to the extent that you all can do more synthesis, that grabs some of these different figures and puts them together and sort of helps to make even a little more sense over them. I mean, the presentations are great, but whatever you can do to even further distill it and make those trends pop will be appreciated.

I don't know, George or Cliff, is there anything you want to say before we go to break here. But turn it back to you.

MR. SILVA: I just want to thank everyone for the comments. I think we got some good feedback. I appreciate it.

MR. BROOKS: All right. Then we should get to a break. Randy, anything you want to say before we go to a break?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: I think we're good for going to break. Look forward to coming back with leadership.

MR. BROOKS: Okay, great. And again, we will start at 10:30 sharp. Because we have just a half of leadership and we want to get every second of that. So, see you in 15 minutes.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:14 a.m. and resumed at 10:30 a.m.)

MR. BROOKS: Okay, Randy, I'm going to hand it off to you. Before I do that, I will just remind AP members that we will have a hard stop for leadership at 11 o'clock. So when after we hear some remarks and open it up for questions, I will ask AP members to be really focused in their conversation so we have a chance to hear from as many folks as possible, you know, have a good conversation.

Randy, to you.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, thank you, Bennett. I think we've got -- I'm not sure that we have Janet yet. So I know we've got Sam.

MR. BROOKS: Right.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: And I think we're working behind the scenes here to make sure that we get Janet here shortly.

MR. BROOKS: Okay.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: So we may need to pause just for a moment.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. I'm sure her calendar is jam packed. She's just jumping from meeting to meeting.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, I've talked with her. She's certainly intending to give some initial remarks, so we should wait.

MR. BROOKS: Okay.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: She just asked me for the panelist password, so --

MR. BROOKS: Okay, good. HR and Clifford, you haven't seen in the Q&A, Rick

Webber just posted a link for you there. Okay, I think she is joining right now. I see her name there.

MS. COIT: Good morning. Can you hear me? I'm sorry, I had a little trouble signing on.

MR. BROOKS: We can. No worries, and welcome. I'm going to hand it off to Randy to do the intro.

Randy, go ahead.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: All right, great. Janet, thank you for joining us and Sam as well. I'll do a little introduction here.

I know you're coming in from probably many other meetings and activities, so hopefully, I'll talk a minute and let you get your breath with joining us.

But so for everyone else on the Advisory Panel, I want to introduce Janet Coit, who is the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. Janet was named as the new Assistant Administrator in June of 2021 this year.

And prior to coming to us, she directed the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management for more than ten years. And prior to her stint as the Director of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, she was the State Director for the Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island for ten years. Prior to that, she was Counsel and Environmental Coordinator for the late Senator John Chafee and subsequently then Senator Lincoln Chafee. And she also served as Counsel to the U.S. Senator Committee on Environmental and Public Works.

She graduated from Dartmouth College and holds a law degree from Stanford Law School.

And then I'll also introduce Sam Rauch who is more of a known quantity to you all and has spoken to this group several times. Sam Rauch is the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs. And he oversees NOAA Fisheries regulatory actions and programs and coordination of the Agency's aquaculture activities and the National Environmental Policy Act programs.

So with that, I'll turn it over to you, Janet.

MS. COIT: Thank you, Randy. Good

morning, everyone, and thank you for that introduction, Randy.

And I want to start by acknowledging the great work of Sam Rauch, during this time that this administration was transitioning before I got here. And now, since I've been here because the experience and commitment and the caring of the people who are leading NOAA Fisheries is so evident to me and that's true of this group as well.

I was able to scan everyone who is on here. I do know some people as I come into this role. Certainly, I'm eager to work with you and look forward to your advice and your support.

This morning, let me just confirm that -- Randy, can you hear me fine? Okay.

This morning I was asked to give a few remarks and I am happy to do that and tell you a little bit more about me and the priorities of this administration. I also hope we have some time for discussion or Q and A. And I have Sam and Kelly and Randy here to help me get up to speed.

So I won't go over everything that Randy just said about my background except to say that for the last ten years as the head of Rhode Island State Department of Environmental Management, I certainly worked a lot on fisheries and habitat issues, marine issues from the Ocean State.

And by the way, Randy, it's Chafee. I was privileged to work for John Chafee in the Senator for many, many years and he is a hero of mine and was really a giant in the conservation world and that's actually what led me to Rhode Island. And then, strange how life is, I ended up working for his son as governor and I worked for three governors in my last role which is quite unusual for a cabinet member at the state level, including Secretary Raimondo. So I worked for her for six and a half years on the entire time that she was Governor of Rhode Island. And my relationship with her and her interest in marine life and the work of NOAA in her role as Commerce Secretary is one of the things that makes it very, very exciting for me to be in this role at this time.

In my last role, I saw a state

perspective on many of the issues that you are working on. I was on the New England Council as head of the state agency represented by some fine people who were leaders in marine fisheries in Rhode Island. So I'm very aware of the Magnuson-Stevens Council process and in bringing a respect for role of advisors like you, state agencies, stakeholders, academic experts to this position.

The only other thing I'd like to say about my background is when I did work on the Hill, which is another set of relationships and experience that I bring to this role, the primary focus of my work for many years was the Endangered Species Act and worked to reauthorize that law, to strengthen that law, and part of my passion in this role is the work that we're doing on protected species, marine mammals. And part of my motivation is the particular challenges we have at this time.

So I must say I've learned a lot from Randy and Kelly over the last few weeks about the work of HMS Advisory Panel. You're a unique animal and not a panel that I've worked with before, so I will be counting on folks to bring me up to speed as I learn and grow in this job.

It's clear that the Advisory Panel is a very important and valued partner to NOAA Fisheries and set the process and the participatory role that you play across the geographic range of these highly-migratory species is important and really adds expertise and value to our decision-making process.

So the engagement, one of the things I really want to focus on is just really solid engagement and communication with stakeholders, fishing community, environmental community. I'm very aware of the economic importance of the work that we do and one of the earlier executive orders under the Biden administration was about equity. And so we want to serve all people. We want to be very mindful of past injustices, under served and under represented communities, and I think the work that you're all doing and that we're doing together lends itself to taking another look at those issues, access in equity.

Definitely have a great appreciation for the difficulty of your work and the perspectives that you provide as we move forward with this sustainable fisheries imperative.

A couple more thoughts about the administration's priority. Dr. Spinrad, the head of NOAA, had each of us who were political appointees do training on scientific integrity and the scientific basis for the work that we do at NOAA Fisheries and across NOAA, and thus the cutting edge and authoritative science of NOAA are really needed and important. And we know that the changes that are happening due to climate change are having a dramatic effect on our oceans.

Cisco Werner, the Chief Scientist at NOAA Fisheries, keeps saying these aren't the same oceans that we learned about when we all went to school, meaning they've changed so dramatically and we're learning so much about those changes. And certainly climate change is another priority of the Biden-Harris administration and is having a dramatic effect on our oceans and our fisheries management.

Yesterday, we spent an afternoon, those of in the NOAA Fisheries leadership listening to presentations from every region in regard to climate change and what our science and our observations are showing us and it was really moving and impactful to hear from the North Bering Sea to the Western Pacific to the Caribbean the rate and pace of change. And while we see changes that are predictable in terms of sea level rise or warming waters, there's also the dramatic events and dramatic habitat events that we couldn't have predicted and that are impacting in the economic and the sustenance fisheries in a way that we need to better predict, if we can, but better manage for when it comes to buffers or conservation or conservative values.

So climate resilience, fisheries, our climate and fisheries initiative, our areas of particular focus for me and for this administration as mentioned the environmental justice issues are top of mine and I'm representing the Commerce Department on a White House panel on environmental justice issues. This is something I am passionate about working with all of you and across the administration on.

The other facet of climate change I

wanted to mention is renewable energy development because the scaling up of offshore winds is something that is another priority of this administration in regards to the decarbonization of our energy sector and a commitment that's being made and we're part of that team, but we have a unique role in terms of being stewards of the marine resources with concern about migratory species, concern about habitat, and concern about the unknowns in regard to what will be the impact of this energy development along the Atlantic Coast. And the Atlantic is the -- kind of ground zero so to speak of offshore wind development. There's 17 active leases along the Atlantic Coast right now. Our Greater Atlantic Region and our Northeast Science Center have been spending so much time on offshore wind issues diverting time from other important issues as we look at impacts on great whales and sea turtles and on the fisheries.

We have a big meeting with BOEM tomorrow to talk about these issues and there really isn't a road map for how you do compensatory mitigation and so that will be a really large focus of mine and Secretary Raimondo's and of our team.

Seafood sector, you know, the work that we need to do on conservation and the work that we need to do that maintains sustainable fisheries sometimes intersect in a strange way. But the job -- the coastal communities helping them to be sustainable. Can we predict right now the right level of effort? That is another area that I think is very, very specific to the work that you're doing and important. It's a fascinating time. It's a consequential time to be involved in the work that we're all doing.

So it's interesting, just one kind of digression. When I was working at Rhode Island DEM and the pandemic hit. It was super stressful for everyone and locked up, lots and lots of isolation. But people turned to the water.

So we noticed in Rhode Island the increase in recreational fishing, increase in boat buying, and that's an important economic sector. But it was also just interesting, a lot of people rediscovered the outdoors, rediscovered marine environments. And I think we'll see building pressure on our oceans in a variety of ways.

My husband often says as he goes out kayaking here that it's Rhode Island's only wilderness, but it really doesn't feel like a wilderness when you look at all the planned and interesting uses. And if I can emphasize with being a migratory species, you know, the work that you all have to do to protect those habitats is awesome.

So I don't want to get into specifics that are sort of beyond my knowledge in terms of some of this. I've been briefed on the work that you're doing today on the continuing challenges. I heard from a lot of people about the shark fisheries and a lot of competing points of views. So the work that you're doing will really help us prioritize the right actions to address some of those concerns, concerns with shark degradation. And I mentioned the multiple user groups. I think the management challenges in front of you are similar to, but maybe even more complex than some of those that we face in other regions. So this Advisory Panel again is a unique entity and the work that we're doing is so important. So I just want to thank you for the time.

I know you were all very busy and that you have experience, you have expertise that you bring to this. And again, I think the challenges that we face today make this work super interesting, but also perhaps more challenging than it's ever been before.

As we talked to the folks yesterday from Alaska, they talked about sort of decades and decades were status quo management was working well and then all of a sudden things were changing so dramatically.

So thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today and for serving as our chief partners in our management. Again, I think the work we're doing is critical to conservation and biodiversity in the world and very, very important to the U.S. economy. And I look forward to getting to know you and I can see you in person and to hearing some of your thoughts today.

So I'll stop there and hand it back to you, Randy.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thanks, Janet. And I think actually I'll hand it over to -- well, unless Sam has something to say, but I think we'll hand it to Bennett to handle the queue.

MR. BROOKS: Yes. Thanks. Sam, you want to jump in here? Any words here or just open it up?

MR. RAUCH: No, just open it up.

MR. BROOKS: Okay, great. Let's do that.

Janet, thanks so much for those comments. Really, really thoughtful and I'm sure they'll trigger some questions here.

What I would like to do is make sure that you have a chance to hear from all the different sectors that are on the panel and so I'll bounce around a little bit here.

Let's start off with Rick Bellavance. If folks could just introduce themselves, name, and give Janet a sense of affiliation would be helpful.

MS. COIT: Well, actually, Rick Bellavance is one of the people I know, so good morning, Rick.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

I'm good. I worked closely with Rick over many, many years on many, many issues, but Rick, I had no idea until this role how many other people you've worked with.

MR. BELLAVANCE: Thanks for that. I appreciate it, both Sam and to you, Janet. Thanks for your time this morning talking to us and introducing yourself. You do a very good job, I'm sure.

I brought up a point yesterday during the bluefin tuna discussion that I thought tied in a little bit to some of the things that you mentioned during your comments, that I thought would be helpful to just repeat a little bit.

This year in the southern New England and in Rhode Island, in particular, we had a strong bluefin tuna fishery that we hadn't seen as strong like it was this year in quite a while. And I personally used to do a lot of that through to presence of sand lance which is a forage fish for a lot of different things like the marine mammals that you were talking about, the HMS species that we're here to talk about today.

And it also happens to be that a lot of that fishing activity took place in the wind energy areas off of Rhode Island in Coxes Ledge and so I started learning a lot more about sand lance this year. And I learned that their habitat is really particular. They need a particular grain of sand to live in because if it's too small of a grain, they'll suffocate. If it's too big, they won't be able to burrow into the sand which they like to do both on a day-to-day basis and as a hibernation type of behavior over the wintertime.

So I'm just reaching out to you and your Agency folks, all the folks in the Science Center to do what they can to better understand the importance of sand lance to the southern New England area for the HMS species and as well as marine mammals.

I don't know that we really talked about them a lot during the discussions I've had with offshore wind planning, but I don't want them to get overlooked so I thought I'd take a minute to bring that up.

Thanks, and it's good to see you.

MS. COIT: Thanks, Rick. I'd just like to offer in reaction specifically that sand lance. Maybe some other people want to speak to that, but it was disappointing to see Coxes Ledge be part of a lease area because we had identified it and you were part of that process in Rhode Island as being extremely important habitat. And NOAA Fisheries had identified that area as essential fish habitat.

So one of the things we're working on right now with Interior Department looking at lessons learned is whether we can, without new authorities, because we're dealing with existing law, whether we can have a better communication that avoids some of these conflicts or that allows essential fish habitats identified by NOAA Fisheries which is advisory to have a better chance of being kept out of some of the wind lease areas where they won't be turbines on top of some of these areas.

So I think Coxes Ledge is to me a sore point and probably to you as well.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Let's go to Katie Westfall and then we'll go to Scott Taylor.

Katie.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MS. WESTFALL: Can you hear me?

MR. BROOKS: Yes, we can.

MS. WESTFALL: Great. I'm Katie Westfall. I'm the Director of Resilient Fisheries and Communities at the Environmental Defense Fund.

Janet, it's so great to have you at the helm at NMFS, you bring some really wonderful experience to the Agency at a crucial time.

Just a couple of quick comments. I wanted to commend NOAA on the launch of the Climate and Fisheries Initiative. It's incredibly exciting to see this across NOAA effort that seems really unprecedented and really brings the type of build of modeling and decision support tools that's a critical part of the equation for increasing resilience to changing ocean conditions.

And as I'm sure other AP members said I also recently participated in a kickoff opener for the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning Initiative which is also critically exciting and great to see the three Atlantic Councils, folks at Headquarters and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission working together on governance management issues related to climate change and shifting stock.

And I just want to thank you for these efforts and encourage the Agency to make sure that HMS fisheries aren't left out of all this great work given that they are managed differently and not through the regional council systems. And just a reminder to not forget HMS since we're doing all this great work on climate. So thank you so much.

MS. COIT: Thank you, Katie. We're also really -- and appreciate your EDF role, in general, and also in the scenario planning because figuring out how we can manage differently, given the shifting stock through the changes in habitat is front and center for us right now. And I appreciate what you said about the highly migratory species as well. We won't leave them out.

MR. BROOKS: Okay, thanks. Scott Taylor, let's go to you.

MR. TAYLOR: Really appreciate the time you've given us. Also Sam, again, as usual. My name is Sam Taylor. I'm a Board Member of Blue Water Fisherman's Association. I'm also an honorary manager of longline fleet out of South Florida.

A couple of points that I wanted to make quickly to you all. The U.S. surface fleet is the most sustainably managed, regulated fleet in any way place in the world. And over the last several years, we've seen a steady level of attrition within the industry and our ability to be able to catch our swordfish quota. It's being fair with far less sustainably managed fish from other countries that fill that void for us.

A big part of that has been the continuing loss of flexibility and --

(Audio interference.)

MR. TAYLOR: --- and I wanted to take the opportunity to talk real briefly about the monument. The monument was basically for bottom structure, but you know, that area. The loss of that additional surface area would be devastating again for the fleet, particularly this time of the year and really would not achieve any additional conservation management because these fish as we know are pelagic in nature. They've been moved. They've followed the bait and food, and at no time deserve your anywhere approach the bottom structure. We're slowly dying the depth of a fast frontier here for lack of a better description and I really wish that you would take some time to look into particular issues of the way the gear is actually fished in those areas how little impact that it has.

And the last point that I want to make is the biggest crisis that we have presently is that of staffing. That is tied to a bunch of different things in terms of the ability to be able to fish because we've taken our fleet primarily from our teams on the coastal fleet to an onshore longline fleet, but that the economics in the industry haven't kept up with it.

In Hawaii in particular, and on the West Coast of the United States the staffing for the longline boats is almost 100 percent labor from foreign countries, whether or not it's Filipino or Indonesian, those people are not given proper visas. When they come into the ports, they were essentially remanded to the vessels.

If we can't find a way to recruit proper people into this industry, you'll see a continuing level of attrition. And we really need the Agency's help. Hopefully, there will be an opportunity to come up to Randy and the staff later on.

We're currently working on H3 visa program and a training program to work with some other nations to be able to bring the type of help that will fill the void if we can't get it domestically here. It's been a very, very tough challenge for us to bring young people into recruit, primarily because of the fact that these boats are being pushed offshore, 20, 25 days a year and there's a -- I've got five grandkids and a couple of kids. It's difficult to manage family in that environment.

And so there are workers that do want to do that kind of work, where American labor may not want to, but there ought to be ability to legally hire them. And it's a big problem. It's the single biggest issue that I think that everybody would agree across the board. There is recruitment and the ability to properly staff these vessels.

So again, I appreciate your time. And whatever you can do in those regards would be a big help.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott.

MS. COIT: Scott, could I ask -- thank you on all the issues you raised. Could you send -- this issue has come up when the Secretary was in Seattle in terms of staffing and workforce development. But also a similar issue, the tourism industry was something she was working on in terms of getting workers from other nations.

Could you send specific, something specific to me and --- maybe through Randy or Tom because I would like to raise it up to -- it's something that a different arm that the Commerce Department is working on.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. so I'd like to clarify that with Blue Water Fisherman's Association because it's an issue across the board. We've been working with an immigration attorney down here to do some of the preliminary work. There's a way that obviously, you know, Randy's staff or me behind this in order to deal with some of the key bureaucratic issues for lack of better description would be a huge help. So I will send over with Larry a very specific request.

MS. COIT: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. I painfully have to tell us that I think we're out of time. I can tell that Bennett and Sam you are both booked at the top of the hour and I respect that.

There are a whole bunch of people who have more questions about this area, but I think we're going to have to save that for another day. So thank you, both, for making the time to be here. We'll look forward to having you back at future HMS meetings.

MS. COIT: Thank you, Bennett, and I will look to Randy for a report out and if there's other folks that had burning issues they wanted to raise maybe through Randy or Kelly you can bring those to me and Sam.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thanks, Sam.

MR. RAUCH: Thanks.

MR. BROOKS: Great. Thank you both. All right, we should jump back in, and I know there was a bunch of folks that had their hands up.

And I think we knew before we started it that we would probably not have enough time to have all the conversation we want there. But it's good to at least get a little time with Janet.

So, with that, what we want to do is shift now and really the rest of the day is going to be focused on Amendment 13. And I'm going to hand things off to Randy and Tom Warren here in a minute.

But I just, by way of kind of setting up the conversation, we always had a lot of conversation on 13 back -- well, we've had lots of conversation over years. Well, a big conversation back in May.

It was a little truncated at the time. There was obviously a lot of interest, a lot of issues to be talking about, and there's been a lot of discussion since then. There's been scoping sessions. This is obviously an issue that is front and center for a whole bunch of you, a lot of important issues being considered here.

The Agency has brought the timeline out in here. This has created the opportunity for more feedback and more internal consideration on this.

And today, we really want to use this meeting time -- and I've set aside a good chunk of this meeting time -- to really have a deeper conversation on this and really push the conversation forward.

And I can't emphasize that enough, right? I don't think it will serve this panel or the Agency well to kind of have a do-over of the conversation we had in May.

The issues that were raised, the concerns that were raised, were heard loud and clear. And I think the goal for today, and the challenge I would put to all of you, is to really try to bring as many fresh ideas, fresh perspectives that you can, reflect on the comments that have come up in scoping, help the Agency think about new ideas, new approaches, additional information, anything that will help them really make sure that it's new with as strong and a thoughtful, and as effective as possible.

I think that's really my charge to everybody, and I really invite you to take that seriously, as we jump into this conversation.

Structurally, what we're going to do is break into three parts as following, and so we're going to break into three different parts, the first we'll jump into in a minute.

We'll focus on the individual bluefin quota program and we'll spend about an hour on that.

After lunch, we'll take up the second part, in which we'll focus on bluefin quota alternatives and purse seine category alternatives, and after break we'll come back for Part 3, which we'll focus on a bunch of other alternatives that are in there.

So, we'll ask you as well to kind of stay with us as we focus on these different parts, so we can add that focus to conversation, if possible.

So, I think that's all I want to say. Justin's going to clean this up. Randy, I'll hand it off to you in case you want to say anything, and then over to Tom.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: No, I don't really have anything to add to that. I think we'll just go ahead and turn it over to Tom so he can take this away.

MR. WARREN: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: So, Tom, it is yours. Go ahead.

MR. WARREN: Okay, thank you, Bennett. Thank you, Randy. Let me share my screen and let me know, please, when you see it.

MR. BROOKS: Seeing your screen, but not yet in presentation mode.

MR. WARREN: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: You're good. Yeah, perfect.

MR. WARREN: So, my name is Tom Warren. I'm with HMS, based in Gloucester, and I'll be providing you with a brief review of Amendment 13 alternatives, with an opportunity for discussion and comments. And trying to get this to advance. There we go. Okay.

So, as Bennett mentioned, I'll be chunking this discussion into three parts, Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3. But first, I'll be giving a brief status overview. So, this table contains the relevant milestones.

Starting in May of this year, we published a proposed rule in the draft Environmental Impact Statement, followed by the HMS panel discussion on May 25th.

And then, subsequently, there was a series of public hearings and public hearing webinars, in-counsel briefings, and then the original end to the common period we scheduled for July 20th.

Based on a couple of public requests, we revised the end of the public comment period to September 20th, and the request was based on an interest in having more time to digest and come to understand the many alternatives in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. So, here again is the IBQ program alternatives.

It's helpful to start with a brief review of some information to lay the groundwork. The three-review, which was the formal Magnuson-required review of the catch-share program, this document we released in 2019.

But one of the recommendations was that an alternative method of distributing IBQ shares should be considered. And that document showed data that indicated a large percentage of the IBQ that had been allocated, in fact, went to inactive vessels.

And longline representatives saw the AP, recommended a different, more dynamic, method of determining shares.

Because the current method that was implemented in 2015 through Amendment 7, is basically a static allocation, a static determination of shareholdings, where over time the amount of shares and the shareholders do not change.

A couple of key definitions. An IBQ share is the percentage of the longline category quota associated with an affirmative vessel, that's based on some kind of formula considering relevant vessel history.

In contrast, an allocation is the amount of bluefin quota, in pounds, that's associated with that vessel, based on the share percentage, but also applied to the annual longline category.

By simple math, if a vessel has X percent of the quota, you multiply that share percent by the annual longline quota.

So, in other words, the share under the current system does not change, but the allocation would change if the quota changes.

So, the alternatives that address the method of share determination are depicted here. So, all of these were analyzed in the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

And the different alternatives are denoted by the arrow, so you have the arrow denoting the different alternatives.

The alternatives that were in fact proposed, and we call them proposed measures, those are indicated by the red fonts, in both these measures and the rest of the presentation.

So, the first suite of measures

analyzed, with respect to the IBQ shares, were four dynamic determination of IBQ shares. Basically, these four alternatives would eliminate the existing designations of shareholders, and distribute IBQ shares only to currently active vessels, those engaged in fishing.

And the different iterations of this dynamic determination were using a metric of hooks, or using a metric of sets, or the proposed measure, using a metric of specific species landings, or based on equal allocation.

But what these have in mind is, the intent is to provide some measure of fishing effort, or some measure of a determinant that would -- it's an indicator of how much bluefin a vessel might need.

And then, lastly, a rerun of the Amendment 7 formula, which instead of using a suite of years originally -- years which was 2006 to 2012 -- this would use a revised suite of years 2016 to 2018.

But it's a cousin of the current system, in that it would rerun Amendment 7, but then be a static share.

So, getting into the proposed measure of dynamic allocation based on designated species landings, this would be shares based on specific species landing choosing eDealer data, and those specific species would be defined as Swordfish, Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin and Skipjack tunas.

Define shareholders annually, based on the three most recent years available data, and again, reactive vessels, those using longline gear, at least once during the three year period.

Another caveat is that vessels must currently have a valid tuna to the allocated quota.

And also, another caveat is for deep water horizon, oceanic fish restoration project participants, that project that's been occurring in the Gulf of Mexico.

Approximate amount of effort would be assigned to represent a longline effort that the participant vessels would have had if they had not been participating in the project.

This is showing you the impacts of the no-action, or the status-quo alternative.

Basically, a snapshot of what the current system is, so that when we get into what the proposed and other alternative measures are, then you'll have a baseline that's prepared.

So, under the current system there are three tiers defined, three separate shareholder percentages. So, the high tier is currently entitled to 1.2 percent share of the total quota, medium is .6 percent, and the low tier is 37 percent.

And so, this translates into these various pounds of IBQ allocation, based on the current quota, so you can see the highest level is 4317, and the lowest, 1330. And also in the right-hand column, the number of shareholders equaling 136.

So, again, since 2015, the defined shareholders has not changed, being 136 total. Yet, the number of active vessels has been less than that, and therefore, vessels that have been inactive have basically been a quota sink.

In contrast, the dynamic allocation alternatives are depicted here. One that's not depicted here is equal shares. This is a dynamic allocation that would be also based on active vessels, but the quota would be divided evenly.

So, going from left to right, under this system there would be four quartiles, four, three, two, one. And this shows you a comparison of the amount of shared percentage in allocations between hooks, sets, and a proposed method landings.

So, going from left to right, you'll see that the actual percentages under these three alternatives are fairly similar, 2.05, 1.85 and 2.09.

But what you'll notice is, in contrast to the current system, where the highest amount is 1.2 percent, these alternatives would have meaningfully higher percentage amounts.

Also, what's notable is that the lowest percentage, .17, .17, .12, is notably lower than the current lowest percentage of .37.

So, kind of the take-home message with these methods of allocation is, the range of percentage allocations are greater, the amounts are higher than the status-quo action, and the lowest amounts are lower.

You'll see in the right-hand section, the number of shareholders defined in each of these tiers. What's notable and particular, is the bottom row, the total number of shareholders, 97, 97 and 99, notably lower than the currently number of shareholders under the no-action alternative, of 136.

So, basically, the pelagic longline pie would be divided by less participants, and yield a larger slice of the pie for many of the participants.

Not all, but many, would get a larger piece of the pie. Some would get a smaller piece of the pie.

The number of shareholders differs between hooks and sets and landings, because there are different databases used. Hooks and sets are based on VMS data, and landings is based on the eDealer data.

So, another way to compare is the number of vessels that either gain or lose quota amounts compared to the status-quo.

Very similar results, hooks and sets, each would see 66 active vessels gaining, versus what they have now, versus 31 vessels losing share and allocation, compared to what they have now.

Landings, 57 vessels would gain and 42 would lose. Now, on its face, it looks like, okay, well, the proposed landings has less number of vessels that gain and more that lose.

Well, this isn't the whole picture though. In addition, the amount of quota that these vessels gain and lose is a relevant metric. And although I don't show it, basically, when you look at the amount of quota that the gainers gain, and the amount of quota that the losers lose, this, based on landings, would be more beneficial than hooks and sets.

But again, these differences in these three different allocations are relatively minor, in terms of the scale of differences.

One thing not noted here is that the vessels that would lose IBQ, so to speak, the universe here is only active vessels. So, those vessels that have share under the current program, those 136, well, it would be 36, 37 vessels that also lose quota because they're not currently active.

So, switching gears a little bit out of the metrics and taking a step back, another integral part of the IBQ program are the regional designations of IBQ.

So, in addition to the amount of IBQ, each IBQ share has an associated designation, called a regional designation, and you recall that these regional designations, Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic, were intended to prevent increases in effort into the Gulf of Mexico.

And so, under the no-action current system, each vessel has an amount of Gulf of Mexico, and each vessel has an amount of Atlantic-designated IBQ.

Gulf of Mexico IBQ can be used to account for bluefin caught in either the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic. But Atlantic-designated IBQ can only be used to account for bluefin caught in the Atlantic. So, basically, the Atlantic IBQ is more restrictive in its use.

There's the no-action alternative, and there's an alternative that would eliminate such designations, but nevertheless cap what we catch from the Gulf of Mexico.

Under the current system, there's 35 percent of the total individual bluefin quota is designated as Gulf of Mexico quota. So, this cap on the amount of Gulf IBQ serves as a cap on the amount of bluefin that can be caught from the Gulf of Mexico, either landings or dead discards.

So, again, the second alternative would either eliminate that, but would retain that cap.

But what we're proposing, however, is something different. It's a modification of the designation system, to account for the fact that it would be implemented in the context of the dynamic allocation system. And this would cap catch from the Gulf of Mexico.

So, more on this proposed modification of the regional designations.

Again, it would be in conjunction with the dynamic allocation, and there'd be regional designations determined on an annual basis. So, again, not static.

But there'd be no change in the accounting rules. The Gulf of Mexico IBQ could be used to account for bluefin in either location, Gulf or Atlantic, but the Atlantic IBQ could only be used to account for bluefin in the Atlantic.

So, for example, if a vessel landed 90 percent of their designated species in the Gulf and ten percent in the Atlantic -- and this would, again, be over a three-year look-back -- their IBQ share designations would be 90 percent Gulf and ten percent Atlantic.

However, this cap would be maintained at 35 percent, but a new aspect of this system would be that the cap would be able to be reduced from the 35 percent based on various criteria.

And these would be the same criteria used currently to make in-season adjustments to the General category and other in-season fisheries. So, again, a flexible system.

And the intent of this is to allow a little bit more flexibility in the system, so that, for example, if a vessel that had in the past fished predominantly in the Atlantic but wanted to increase effort a little bit in the Gulf, they could do so.

But they would need to fish there first, in order to basically earn their allocation, based on Gulf of Mexico landings.

So, for example, if a vessel did not have any Gulf of Mexico landings, and therefore no Gulf of Mexico shares, it would need to lease Gulf of Mexico IBQ for a year, and then in the following year its shares and allocation would reflect a little bit of Gulf of Mexico activity, assuming they landed designated species, and their shares would be reflected. So, it's a little bit of flexibility in the system.

So, leaving that aside and going to another aspect of the IBQ system, is the proposed measure that there'd be no changes with respect to the use of Northeast distant area data.

So, the Northeast distant area, as you may recall, is an area off the Grand Banks where basically the far-most eastern portion of the Longline Fishery, where there's just a few participants typically, it has a separate ICCAT allocation, 25 metric tons, and some separate rules.

And those separate rules also include

a separate rules for its participation in the IBQ program, whereby vessels that fish in the Northeast distant area, or the NED, do not have to use IBQ to account for their bluefin catch until that 25 metric tons set-aside has been achieved.

And currently, vessels fishing in this area aren't treated any differently, in terms of the allocation formula and metrics, for determining how much shares they would get.

So, we would maintain this system. Basically, the allocation formulas are blind with respect to where a vessel fishes.

Whether it's fishing in the Northeast Distant area, Gulf of Mexico, Rhode Island, North Carolina, South Florida, it's blind to location, with the exception of the Gulf versus the Atlantic. So, that's the proposed measure.

Another alternative analyzed is not including the Northeast Distant area fishing activity in the calculation of IBQ allocations.

Switching gears once again, we're proposing no change with respect to the sale of IBQ shares. Currently, shares are not allowed to be sold. Shares are not severable from a longline permit.

In Amendment 7, when the IBQ was implemented, the thought was that accumulation of shares via sale, there's not a need for accumulation of shares, and it would complicate the IBQ program, as well as complicate the IBQ leasing market. And we're proposing no change to this.

However, we did analyze sale of IBQ shares as an alternative in the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

One suite of alternatives looks at capping the amount of shares an entity may hold, or capping the amount of IBQ allocation that the sea may lease or use.

In the Magnuson-Stevens Act, there is a provision that says in a catch-share program, thou shalt not allow excessive accumulation of shares.

So, to address that Magnuson requirement, we analyzed several alternatives that would cap the amount an entity can hold or acquire, the amount of shares.

Now, I did just state that shares cannot be sold. Well, they cannot, but the way an entity or an individual acquires shares is indirectly through the purchase of a longline permit, because indeed folks can purchase the limited access longline permit.

So, it's an indirect method of accumulating shares, which can and does occur. So, the analyzed alternatives are no-action, capping at seven percent.

But what we're proposing is a cap at 25 percent, which would permit a single entity from pulling a disproportionate amount of shares.

This would allow some accumulation of shares to provide a business or an organization some flexibility if their business plan was optimized by acquiring some more shares, but it does limit the amount of accumulation that a business could do. But we did also analyze 50 percent.

Similarly, we analyzed a couple of alternatives for restricting leases, but we're not proposing any restriction on leasing, so this is the no-action alternative for the proposed measure, which does not propose an amount that could be leased, a maximum amount.

And the reason that we're proposing this is that because leases are temporary for the duration of the year, business can't really acquire a large amount over time, because basically the amount that they lease would disappear. So, it doesn't really make economic sense.

And really, the only incentive to acquire an amount that would be a large amount is to account for a bluefin tuna catch, which is the reason for the IBQ in the first place.

We are proposing a modification to the dealer reporting requirements for IBQ. Specifically, eliminate the requirement for the dealer to report dead discards.

This was a redundant measure implemented in 2015, redundant because the vessel is required to report dead discards through their VMS. We have determined and documented that indeed vessel operators do a great job reporting dead discards through VMS, and so we're eliminating this redundant requirement for the dealer to report dead discards.

In fact, the dealers did not report dead discards very well, and it's more efficient and effective for the vessel to.

Secondly, we've proposed eliminating requirements that would continue the dealer's requirement to enter a vessel PIN.

Basically, as a security measure, currently the vessel PIN is needed by the dealer to enter data into the database. So, basically, the vessel operator has to coordinate with the dealer.

It was intended to operate on a trip-level basis, but as a practical matter, the dealer just gets the PIN from the vessel, that it routinely lands, accepts catch from, and puts that in. So, this would basically simplify the system.

However, as an oversight measure to provide security, the vessel owner would be sent an email and notification when the dealer basically inputs catch into the system and debits the vessel and its account, so there's oversight retained.

The electronic monitoring program, we have several aspects that we're proposing modifications to. The first is the hard drive requirement.

Rather than the current requirement that the vessel operator mail in the hard drives after every trip, instead the hard drive would need to be mailed in only after every two trips, and this would reduce the cost and burden associated.

The hard drives have not been full of data. So, basically, hard drives can hold multiple trips. So, this is the proposed simplification.

We're clarifying the regulations that LINKS has the authority to install hardware such as a boom, so that the video camera can obtain an optimal view.

And specifically, we're looking to improve the view of the water where the fish are hauled, outboard of the side of the vessel.

And this is based on research done in Hawaii, that shows that increasing the camera angle by measure of a telescopic boom or a boom that levers down, can increase the amount of, and quality of, data on the fish that are either all through the water, or more specifically, fish that are discarded.

Thirdly, we're proposing authorizing NOAA fisheries to install a measuring grid on the deck in view of the camera, either a painted grade, or a mat that would serve as a standardized size reference, to facilitate both determination of fish size and species, and this would facilitate a determination of size and species, and especially in the context of artificial intelligence and computer automation, that would reduce costs of the electronic monitoring program.

Lastly, with respect to the IBQ program, Magnuson-Stevens Act requires a system for NOAA fisheries to recover its costs of administering the IBQ program. And this, again, is a requirement from Limited Access Programs under Magnuson.

Vessels would be required to pay a fee based on the amount of bluefin that they landed. So, it would be specific to their --

(Audio interference.)

The key aspect of this program to remember though, is NMFS would make an annual decision whether or not to charge a fee. And the reason for this is the total fees by Magnuson-Stevens are limited to a maximum of three percent of the ex-vessel value of the bluefin landed by the longline fleet.

So, because the bluefin is not a target species, and the IBQ program provides strong incentives to void bluefin catch, the amount of bluefin catch to begin with is not very much.

And because total fees would be limited to three percent of ex-vessel value, then the total fees are very much reduced further. So, you're looking at a small pie and reduced to three percent of that pie.

So, NMFS basically would not assess a fee if the total amount of fees to be recovered is similar to NMFS's cost of actually implementing this program on an annual basis.

Their costs associated with implementing this program, determining the amount landed, determining the average price, communicating with the fleet, an administrative system to recoup these fees, follow-up adminis-

trative system to follow up on the folks that are slow in payment, and associated communication and associated Federal Register documents, etc.

So, the picture I'm trying to paint is that it may not make economic sense to recover costs, but we will be implementing a system to do so, and would make this determination not --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. WARREN: Sure.

MR. BROOKS: Tom, I wanted to mention this for just one second.

(Audio interference.)

I also wanted to state to the AP members, I'm imagining we're probably going to want to go until an extra ten or fifteen minutes into lunch, that we have time for conversations.

MR. WARREN: Okay. And I am wrapping this up, believe it or not.

So, last thing with respect to the Longline Fishery, we're clarifying the regulations for those few vessels that use a green-stick gear and have a longline permit, allowing retention of 173-inch legal-sized bluefin.

But the vessel would be required to account for bluefin using the IBQ allocation report, green-stick-caught bluefin through VMS, and abide by the other IBQ program requirement, with the exception of electronic monitoring would not be required on green-stick gear sets, and it would not matter if longline gear is onboard.

There's an alternative analyzed that would restrict the use of green-stick gear to when longline gear is not available.

So now, this finally ends my description of the measures. And rest assured, this portion of the three-part session of my summary of Amendment 13 is the longest.

So, the most challenging description and most challenging listening session to Tom's voice drone on has come to a close.

So, the summary of comments, the folks that support the use of designated species landings, folks that do not support the use of designated species landing metrics, and some reasons are that the metrics should include Mahi landings, which they do not.

Use of landings would incentivize retention of smaller fish, not a standardized metric. These sets, instead of landings as the metric, limit to one a day.

Do not support use of quartiles, support custom shares, distribute minimum amount, implement a method to facilitate new entrants, a support for the preferred alternatives with respect to the regional designations, support for equal allocations.

And then, electronic monitoring support for the hard drive requirement, proposed flexibility, the comment saying we just need more flexible with how we transfer data, such as allow these satellite transfer.

No support for the installation of booms, no support for the measuring grid, and some support for these requirements.

So, to start our discussion, one thing I'd like to note is I will be talking about the purse seine proposed measures this afternoon. Basically, reallocation of the purse seine.

And I realize that the quota alternatives that I just discussed leading to the allocation or amount of quota and shares that a vessel would receive, is linked to some of the other quota alternatives that I'll discuss this afternoon, specifically those relating to whether the purse seine quota is reallocated to the Longline category or not.

So, I'd urge you to kind of constrain your comments to the information I just discussed, and not get into whether the purse seine piece of the pie goes to everybody or not.

So, with that said, regarding the comments that don't support the proposed measures, can you prioritize your concerns or suggested modifications to what we've proposed to the IBQ measures, what data or analysis provide further insights, or is there a new comment or nuance you'd like to propose.

And so, with that I'll open up the floor. We will be taking notes on a Google-sheet, which, as we write them down we'll share with you, so you can see some of the comments.

And so, I'll be trying to address questions as they come in, but we will also be taking notes. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks so much, Tom. I know there was a ton there to walk through, and thank you. You did a really nice job with it.

Again, let's just all assume we're going to go until quarter after, if we need that. We'll just tuck into a little bit of that lunchtime. Since people don't have to queue into the sandwich shop, that should be fine.

All right, so let's get into it. And again, I really ask people to focus on the questions that Tom had that are sort of, you know, can you help prioritize concerns or modifications?

Is there data analysis that would give the Agency more insight, more understanding? And any kind of new comment with nuances that you'd like to Agency to be thinking about?

Marty, your hand was up before. Then we'll go to Tim, and then to Shana. So, Marty?

MR. SCANLON: Yes, I hope you can hear well. To be honest with you --

MR. BROOKS: We got you, Marty.

MR. SCANLON: I have an awful lot to say here and a very little time to say it. I'm really disappointed in the amount of time that was taken with this presentation. We've already heard this at the last AP meeting. I've listened to this throughout three webinars that I attended.

We were also supposed to review this before we got on the meeting today, so we could spend as much time in discussion as possible.

If you can, Tom, I'd like you to go back to the first page so I could start addressing everything that you presented to us one thing at a time. I think that's the best way to do this as we move forward here. Can you do that? Is that possible?

MR. BROOKS: I think he's moving it back. And Marty, I know there's a lot to comment on. I will just ask you to be as succinct as you can so there's lots of time for others too. But go ahead.

MR. SCANLON: Well, basically, this

basically pertains to the pelagic longline industry, just about every one of these issues here.

MR. BROOKS: I know. I know. Front and center.

MR. SCANLON: As far as -- let me just get to it here. We'd prefer that the allocation be reset based on sets that we made. We have a prepared comment to present it at the end of the comment period.

But our reasoning is so that we can -- to us, it's the fairest way to do it. I mean, we don't any means of the tears that way. The vessels that are the most active wind up making the most sense.

As you see in your graphs there, the hooks and sets have the most impact on the ones that'll get the most and the ones that'll lose the least. So, I mean, to me that's cut-and-dried, it should be sets.

I mean, if you go to a tier system, you miss by one pound, and all of a sudden you're basically really handicapped by as little as one pound can really handicap how you have to conduct your business throughout the rest of the time there.

So, us, we want it done, the pelagic longline industry, Blue Water, we want it to be reallocated by sets. So, we can move to the next page there.

MR. BROOKS: You mean the next page, Marty? Or the next -- you mean --

MR. SCANLON: The next topic. Let's go to the next topic there.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, next page. Yep, the alternative.

MR. SCANLON: We're not going to get into as much detail as I'd like to, so I'm going to try to cover all these little things as quickly as I can here.

MR. BROOKS: Yep, that's great.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. SCANLON: Now, one of the things that we talked about is eligibility for quota. We believe that a vessel, if he's to be deemed eligible for quota, he should have made at least a minimum amount of sets to qualify for enough quota to leave the dock.

If you don't make enough sets to get enough quota to leave the dock -- and that's one of the arguments that you made, to have tears -- is that under your tiers system, the vessels may not have enough quota, through any formulation that you made, to acquire enough quota to leave the stock, and now you have to average them up and average the guys at the top of the tiers down. So, that's one of the reasons why we don't like the tiers system and we don't want to go by the wayside.

Also, with the weights there, you're talking about the top vessels landing as much as 600-something thousands of pounds of fish, compared to the vessels at the bottom of those tiers, at 220,000 lbs.

That's a significant difference in what you have averaged them out to, where a set's a set. The vessels that are catching the most fish generally are making the most, if they're catching the most fish. So, we can move on from that topic right there. What's the next topic here?

MR. BROOKS: Next is the regional designations.

MR. SCANLON: The regional desig-

nation. There's a 35 percent cap in the Gulf of Mexico. As we've seen, and as I brought to the attention of the Agency of --- since the beginning of 2015 of A7 here, because of the deep water horizon project -- which was only supposed to last for a year or two, which is still going on and we're still being told that it's going to end next year -- well, there's 11 vessels having 23 vessels tied up into that.

And with the way this is going, when you reset this allocation, they may be very limited, Gulf of Mexico quota given. And to me and to Blue Water, this is a systematic way of sunsetting the Gulf of Mexico to pelagic longlining.

With a 35 percent cap on the quota there, of the bluefins allowed to be caught there, there's no reason for the designation. Allow Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico both, it should not matter.

Get rid of the designation, put the

35 percent cap, which is in there already, and you got the weak hooks for protection and all of that. So, that's where we stand on that. Next topic.

MR. BROOKS: Next up is sale of IBQ.

MR. SCANLON: Sale of IBQ. We're against the permanent sale of IBQ. Next topic.

MR. BROOKS: IBQ cap.

MR. SCANLON: I don't think there should be a cap on the IBQ. At any given time, any vessel could have a disastrous year or disastrous set, and may be required to acquire as much quota as it could possibly acquire to continue to fish. Next topic.

MR. BROOKS: Other aspects. There's a bunch of them here.

MR. SCANLON: We're in favor of modifying the dealer and all that reporting type of stuff there, to the best means possible. I mean, I believe with our discussions and with our discussions with the Agency, that's going to be an ongoing project, to try to continue to streamline that and to make that better.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Is that the end?

MR. SCANLON: Electronic monitoring. We agree with the two trips. We agree with changing that. We are against increasing the insulation of anything outside the footprint of the vessel, for safety and sea rate reasons.

The same thing goes with the grid on the deck, the painted lines, and all of that stuff there. Any kind of mats to be secured on the deck is an impossibility in rough weather, and if you were to put the painted lines on the deck, you'd be having to come back and do that on a regular basis.

Basically, the decks are resurfaced on a regular basis to assure footing, according to the requirements by our underwriters for our insurance. Next topic.

MR. BROOKS: Cost recovery program.

MR. SCANLON: We're against the cost recovery project. I mean, we don't catch enough bluefins to warrant them, under Magnuson, they would not be able to collect enough money to pay for that. So, I think that's just -- it's there, but I think it's a waste of time to even look at it. I'll top it. We can't afford to have any more expenses put on us here.

MR. BROOKS: Mm-hmm. Retention of bluefin caught with green-stick gear.

MR. SCANLON: We're in favor of that.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. I think that's it. So, Marty, it sounds like -- because I know this is an interest sort of for the Agency to be hearing the prioritizing of concerns.

It sounds like the shifting to sets, the avoiding tears, that that is sort of big, bright lights --

MR. SCANLON: Right.

MR. BROOKS: -- for you. Is that right?

MR. SCANLON: Right. Because then you don't have to worry about designated species. We will have an extensive comment explaining all of that in detail, of our reasoning for that.

I use a different fishing message dealing -- we've gone over this in some of our comments in the prior AP, where targeted fish -- different vessels target different fish for different reasons.

I mean, everything -- there's a million factors involved in that there. Basically, the thing is, is that the sets are the most easily verifiable.

On top of that, the important element of that, is this. The way you have it done under the ways, we're talking about doing this for 2016, 2017 and 2018.

If you go by sets, those are verifiable in real time. We declare every day at the end of each day with the 12 hours, of whether or not we have a bluefin on our gear, and whether we made that set or not.

So, we could actually regulate the industry and give the allocations in real time, with sets to be done in real time, we fish in real time, we're accountable in real time.

So, that's why the sets make the most sense. Nothing's perfect, but that's got the most things going for it.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Marty. That was really succinct. Thank you. Thank you for that. Tim Pickett.

MR. PICKETT: Thanks, Tom and Marty there. We covered a lot of the things I was going to mention.

One thing I would say as a suggestion, this is something to look into, Marty touched on it with the Gulf of Mexico and the way there's going to be a cap on the quota there, or there has been, and there's no -- you have the ability to fish the Atlantic with Gulf of Mexico quota, even though I don't think many people do -- but you cannot fish the Gulf of Mexico with Atlantic quota.

There's enough data right now to understand, and it's kind of -- everybody knows this anyways -- but this time of year after July 1st, your ability to encounter a bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico is pretty much non-existent.

So, in terms of them shifting to an effort-base or a landings-base annual determination of quota, I'd like to see, I mean, a step in the right direction.

I know it's not offered here, but a step in the right direction would be to offer vessels that have Atlantic quota, to fish under that Atlantic quota in the Gulf of Mexico, after July 1st, individually the late-summer, early-fall, where their ability to encounter bluefin is incredibly diminished.

You could put a cap, you could put a trigger in case something odd happened, but I think that would be a good mechanism for people to garner a set experience in landings in the Gulf of Mexico, to make themselves eligible for Gulf of Mexico quota, without having to lease it.

This is existing people that already have Atlantic quota. It would increase the flexibility of the fishery a little bit. I think it might be something that would go on the table later, or I don't know if it could be added to this, but it would be a small concession in the right direction, to kind of add to what Marty was saying, in terms of the Gulf becoming a shut-off entity, in terms of no ability to gain quota, very difficult to lose quota, everything of that nature.

So, I just wanted to throw that out there. That's it.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tim. Shana? Shana, I think your line's open.

MS. MILLER: -- the prize for the shortest presentation yesterday. I think Tom, my condolences that you always seem to end up with the longest presentations, but you did a really good job walking through it. And just a few comments, one on the regional designations.

I think that they are still important. The Gulf of Mexico is still the one place where we can target protections on the much smaller Western population, and especially when we're hearing that there's so many Eastern bluefin in the Western Atlantic along the East Coast right now.

That is not the case in the Gulf of Mexico, so it's still important to have a distinction there.

I think Tim's idea to allow Atlantic IBQ to be fishing the Gulf of Mexico after July 1st or July 15th, whatever. I think that makes sense, but getting rid of the regional designation at all doesn't.

And in fact, I would say that that 35 percent cap should be reduced to 25 percent, especially, as Tim points out, there's only a limited geographic time that longliners would be interacting with bluefin in the Gulf anyway.

So, yeah. So, to change that cap from 35 to 25 percent, just a general support for what you're proposing to do to improve the electronic monitoring. Specifically, support for E3B and E4B, and then like Marty, supporting expanding use of green-sticks and allowing them to retain fish. So, what is that, I5C. Thanks.

MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Shana. Jeff Oden, I know you have to jump off in a minute, so I'm going to let you jump the queue here. Let's bring Jeff in.

MR. ODEN: Thanks, Bennett. I just have a couple of things to add that reinforce what Marty had already mentioned.

Of course, the green-stick gear needs to go without saying. Definitely is my -- a great portion of my landings and many others, inside the Atlantic, are Mahi in early spring. And why should that be excluded, when we're forced to fish under HMS rules?

Thirdly and lastly for me, and like I said, I've got to go get stitches, but as for EM monitoring, we've got two cameras, a VMS, we've got observers up to 17 percent of our fishery, and now you want another camera on us, when nobody else in this whole purview has any scrutiny whatsoever?

You can't even get them to dive on film or to dive on logbook, or declare a tuna.

MR. WARREN: Excuse me. Just to clarify, the proposal isn't a third camera necessarily. It's how the second camera is positioned.

MR. ODEN: Well, my understanding -- okay, whatever. Anyway, okay, but before you go sticking a stethoscope up our butt, I think maybe you want to start looking at other avenues in this fishery.

We're not the only entity here with an issue. The only problem is, we're the only one that gets any attention. And I think as an Agency, you all should start actually realizing what is going on throughout, not just on our boats.

I mean, we've got enough scrutiny now. And anyway, with that, I've got to go. Thank you. Bye.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks, Jeff. Scott Taylor, come right in. Then, we'll go to Rick Weber, and then Alan Weiss. Scott?

MR. TAYLOR: -- echo a couple of things. I mean, Jeff went and took my thunder about this issue with the EM, that -- well, I've always been a supporter of the use of the EM, that it becomes getting the fear-wide, that not only are we singled out, but this is really becoming to the point of being invasive and dangerous, in terms of camera location. We're going to put a boom out over the side of the vessel.

We've demonstrated a level of accountability that is far beyond anybody else that's in the industry, and that you guys, through this increase in level of sort of invasive suggestion about the things -- I really -- getting to the point that it really is a violation of what I believe maybe our civil rights, because it's not being uniformly applied to everybody else in the fishery.

We're not the only ones that are

involved with bluefins. And so we unilaterally basically are of the position that enough is enough until we've brought the other participants in the fishery to some level of parity.

But I do want to note also with the way that the vessels are calculated, that the elimination of 37 vessels that are currently not active, and 36 vessels that would receive a lower portion of allocation, that that essentially is 73 boats that would no longer be eligible for any -- or would be extremely unlikely to be eligible for any sort of transfer, for lack of a better description.

And I know we're going to talk about this later on this afternoon, so I'll leave it open to that. But I do want to sort of put a bug in everybody's ear about something that was mentioned earlier, about the North Carolina fishery and the deep set fishery that was there, that a lot of those birds really just don't have very much firm allocation, and are without the ability to have it where best for the transfer system that's going to be in place, that you're again going to limit -- what's a -- a budgeting fishery, in terms of this.

So, we need to be really careful, in terms of what's going on for -- we're certainly not saying that when things aren't broken, don't fix them.

We've been able to basically stay within the general parameters, while we certainly support a different metric to -- I support the main bullet position of the third allocation.

We need to make sure that we have the ability, when there's a problem, to have quoted this -- it's going to be evenly transferred. And I'll wrap it up with that.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks, Scott. Rick Weber.

MR. WEBER: I want to affiliate myself with Shana supporting Tim, as far as if we're going to protect the pure West until they've spawned, and maybe there's a window of opportunity there.

And also with Marty. My understanding is that industry came in hard with a plan related to sets.

And although I've heard this

presentation now twice, I've never heard a counter-argument to why sets is bad.

I find the argument that it's going to cause people to land fish that they wouldn't have landed otherwise, to be a compelling argument.

You're going to put people on a pound hunt. Regardless of market, they will be fishing for the tonnage, in order to get the quota. And I don't see how that is in the best interests of US fisheries.

But I think it is a clear and predictable outcome. And so, Tom, I invite you to tell me what's wrong with sets. And if you don't wish to, I'll respect that. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Tom, I was going to invite you in just to maybe provide a bit more of the underlying rationale, so it would be helpful for folks to understand.

MR. WARREN: Sure. The initial rationale, with respect to -- well, let me take a step back.

First of all, the metric landings versus sets, versus hooks, versus equal, there's not a bright line and huge compelling reason, frankly in my mind, to go with any of them, and there are nuances mostly between them.

Now, that said, folks have raised some very good points.

The reason for going with landings was that we felt it was a metric that reflected effort, and that vessels essentially fish for dollars/landings, although I understand the difference between the two.

And also, some of the analyses we did with correlation. Landings seemed to correlate more with bluefin catch, and with some of the IBQ metrics that represent our need for IBQ, such as the amount of quota and the amount of leasing.

So, those kind of statistical aspects helped tip the scales. That said, these statistics, these correlation analyses, they were only moderately correlated, so they weren't strongly correlated, in any case. That's, briefly, some of the reasons.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tom. That's helpful. Alan Weiss, and then over to Katie.

MR. WEISS: First of all, in regards to the IBQ allocation issues, I don't understand why -- and when you're talking about this talking, you're talking about a subject area that isn't a matter of conservation. It's a matter of just the functioning of the IBQ system, how it works. And so I don't understand why you wouldn't follow the advice or the request or the pleas of the industry as to what they believe will work best for them as I think they know best what would work for them better than people who are not in the fishery know what would work best for them. And this matter of how to determine who's eligible and for how much quota, it's not a conservation issue because the whole sum total of the quota isn't going to change no matter how you parcel it out.

The -- as far as the tiers are concerned, that, to me, stood out as a particular sore spot because as Marty pointed out, you have to draw those lines and every -- there's going to be people falling just on one side or other of an -- of a division line between tiers. If you're the one that just fell just short, maybe if you had landed one more fish, you would have twice as much or almost twice as much bluefin allocation. That just doesn't make sense. I don't see how that could comport with National Standard 4 in being fair and equitable.

I think you have to parcel out the IBQ proportionate to whatever the metric is that you're using to measure effort. And of course, landings are not a measure of effort. They're a result of effort, and they're not directly correlated. You do now have people who are mindful of marketability of their catch and are specifically choosing to forego catching a larger volume of lower value fish so that they can land higher value fish.

The other item I wanted to touch on is the Gulf of Mexico where there's really no justification for trying to further reduce or tamp down the amount of longline effort in the Gulf of Mexico. For one thing, the ICCAT mandate in regard to spawning areas is just to have no directed fishing for bluefins there.

Second of all -- and this, of course, is not directed bluefin effort -- second of all, the impact on conservation is based on fishing mortality. Overfished status or overfishing are based on levels of population or fishing mortality. That's impacted by the number of fish removed from the population. It doesn't matter whether you caught it in the Gulf of Mexico or North Carolina or the Grand Banks, a removal from the population is a removal, and where you catch it doesn't affect how it impacts the population.

I could get into the -- I'll try not to take too much more time, so I won't get into the reasons for -- the conservation reasons for limiting fishing in spawning areas, but those reasons or justifications for doing that as a general policy matter don't apply to the longline fishery and bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico. So there really is --

MALE PARTICIPANT: Makes sense.

MR. WEISS: -- no reason continue to try to constrain and pull back and -- you know, everyone is going to be constrained by their IBQ and everyone, in aggregate, is going to be constrained by the total quota available. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Alan.

MR. WARREN: Thanks. If I could jump in with a quick remark.

MR. BROOKS: Yes, please, Tom.

MR. WARREN: With respect to kind of the process and listening to industry, and just for the record, when we were considering what measures to propose, we did hear from the industry in support of sets. We also heard from the industry in support of landings and also in support of hooks. So again, in terms of how we came to what we proposed, there's a variety of data and a variety of voices that were in the mix, so just, you know, food for thought.

And of course, the proposed rule comment period provides an opportunity for us to further consider what we proposed and, if warranted, make changes. And we are continuing to listen to all voices and look at all the relevant data.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tom. Katie, why don't you jump in, and then Marty, I think your hand is back up. And then we'll get everyone to lunch. Katie?

MS. WESTFALL: Thank you, Bennett.

And I'm going to be providing a longer comment letter so I'll keep my comments pretty focused here. I did want to echo Rick Weber's comments on basing allocation on landings. I am concerned about it could incentivize the retention of smaller fish and really kind of trying to maximize poundage.

I'm also concerned about Mahi not being included in that designation. As we heard from Jeff, you know, Mahi can be a pretty substantial part of certain fishermen's catch and could potentially put those fishermen at a disadvantage. So I think the steps may need more -- you know, associating allocation on steps may make more sense.

And I'm curious. You know, Marty and Alan make good points on the tier system and I'm wondering what the merits are of a tiered system versus Blue Water and, you know, some of the fishermen's suggestions on calculating bluefin quota just based off of sets using a simpler method over some time period versus, you know, trying to create tiers.

MR. WARREN: Thank you. We had proposed tiers or several reasons. One, in a way, you could think of them as being more simple whereby there's four distinct amounts of shares and associated allocations versus everyone having their own. But more importantly, it cuts out either tail of the distribution, so very high percentages would be limited. Arguably, one would not a very high allocation of bluefin because arguably, it would reduce incentives to avoid bluefin.

And then similarly, it reduces or eliminates the very low allocations which is problematic in the context if there's a minimum allocation amount to fish and a lot of vessels or a portion of vessels have not -- don't have the minimum amount, that's an issue. So you cut out the tails of the distribution basically.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tom. That's helpful to understand. Marty, I'll give you a one quick last bite here. Scott, I see your hand has gone up. If you can each keep it to about 50 seconds, that be great.

MR. SCANLON: One thing I wanted to touch base on here is where Tom talks about the correlation between landings and need for bluefins. Well, that's probably true if you go out there and you just ignore the intent of Amendment 7 in the first place. The intent of Amendment 7 in the first place was to reduce our interactions with bluefin tuna. And the vessels that modified their behavior at the cost of landing less fish, of course landed less bluefin. So that was the purpose of Amendment 7 and the people that participated successfully by you doing the landings here, by you saying that to us, it's almost insulting to tell us that the landings have a direct -- of course they do. If you go out there in total disregard for what you're targeting and of course you're going to catch anything and everything. That's the point of not doing it by landings and doing it by sets.

The other thing that I want to point out to you is that of course there's different voices within the PLL industry, but I want to remind you is that Blue Water Fisherman's Association is the majority voice of the industry. You look around this panel and see how many board members here of Blue Water sit on this panel, and you can -- you know, take it from there. All these other voices that you're hearing from, they don't participate in any of these panels. You're talking about independent industry participants that have their own self-interest at stake. We take and take the time to go out and solicit advice throughout the entire industry and come up -- we try to come up with a unified voice which will work for all participants equally and fairly, and that's Blue Water's purpose, and that's what we bring to the table.

So to tell us that because --

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty.

MR. SCANLON: -- you heard it from somebody else, I mean that's -- you know, don't undermine the effort that Blue Water puts into this process, if you would.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Marty. And I think, Tom, was just trying to characterize that there are a range of use so -- but that's duly noted. Scott, give you the last word here. And again, if you can keep to a minute, that be great.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes. I just want to kind of echo what Marty was saying, that we all have our own opinions about different things. We're trying to do a consensus for what's best for the industry but, you know, every single one of the other user groups gets to maximize its uses on whatever the application is. And, you know, we've always been a big advocate. I think it's kind of, you know, insulting by saying well, you're going to give, you know, from any particular boat or individual, you know, more clearly that they're going to go out and, you know, essentially, exploit that for the use, we are very, very, very much aware of what the parameters are for, you know, the setting and also for the -- this reauthorization. And at the end of the day, our only concern is that it doesn't become a limited factor in the ability for us to catch while balancing that with whatever economic value that we can get out it. You can't keep taking away things that are -- that provide economic value as to the fleet collectively. If everybody else gets an allocation, why is it that you want to disincentivize the use as long as we stay within the allocation that is provided to us. I don't understand that and I'll leave it at that and we'll pick up these other issues this afternoon.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott. And I'll just note from the Q and A saying it's time to hear what's best for the industry participants, especially if the request doesn't affect the resource, it just helps the fishers to perform the activity. Also, it's time to support those that provide the biggest chunk of scientific data.

I know that the HMS has been taking notes and I don't know if you want to put that up there. I'll just flag from my own sort of listening to this conversation. While there -- while we heard some varied views on should -- you know, should the agency get rid of the Gulf of Mexico designation or not, some varied views on electronic monitoring and some of the changes that are under consideration there, we did hear some pretty sort of consistent views on sets over landings, some pretty strong consistent views around tiers and the concerns about having these sort of, you know, you're in, you're out kind of breaks, and some rationales for why you might want go to sets from folks. And in terms of alternative B, we also heard a number of people weighing in, I think everyone weighed in on this, thought it made sense to, you know, consider letting fish in the Gulf of Mexico after July 1 or July 15th, whenever that date is and then also the point for green-stick changes, so some really helpful feedback there. Thanks, everybody.

And I don't know if Tom or anyone else wants to weigh in before we break for lunch?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: I just want to kind of circle back and thank Tom for, you know, some of his comments there to reflect the comments that we received over the long period of time that this has been out including going back and scoping. He accurately reflected the need of the agency to be able to hear from all members of the public that in no way undermines any particular user group or industry group at all. But it is a requirement that we do take public comment and we take all of those comments seriously, and that is an important part of the rulemaking process. And so I want to specifically just acknowledge that, that it's our role, and that we will continue to do that. Thank you, Tom, for explaining that.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. And I don't know if there's a question in the ---

(Audio interference.)

MR. BROOKS: Can you hear me now? Randy, do you hear me?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes, I can hear you.

MR. BROOKS: Sorry, my phone just crapped out on me for a second. Anyway, there's a question in the Q and A from Peter wondering whether the notes that were just put up would be made available to everyone. Can you speak to that for just a quick second before we go to lunch?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yes. I think what we'll be doing and the plan here -- I think because we were just shooting some messages offline here about that -- is that as we come back from lunch, we will make those available for viewing on the screen and continue to make that available but particularly notes that were taken thus far, I think when we come back from lunch, make them available on the screen, yes.

MR. BROOKS: Great, thanks. I want to get everyone to the break. Alan, burning question or can it wait or be handled in the Q and A?

MR. WEISS: Like to quickly if I could throw in something else that -- to follow-up what I was saying before. I'll try to be as quick as I can. In regard to the Gulf of Mexico, there were a couple of speakers from the advisory panel that mentioned that the Gulf of Mexico is an area where it's purely western fish and so things that we would do there would particularly benefit western -- the western stock of bluefins. It's true that certainly that the fish in the Gulf of Mexico are, I suppose, entirely western, but the way I would look at it is that the quota that we have, the entire bluefin quota that we have is a western stock quota. To the extent that we're filling a sizeable chunk of that quota with eastern fish, you know, in a general overall sense, that itself is a huge conservation benefit to the western stock. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks, Alan. Thanks, everybody, for the good conversation. Tom, thank you for the really thoughtful presentation and some of the clarifying comments I think really helped animate the conversations. Thanks. We'll be back at 1:30, so an hour and 10 minutes. Thanks, all, and we'll see you in a little bit.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 12:21 p.m. and resumed at 1:31 p.m.)

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Well, we are at 1:30, so I think we should jump back in. Welcome back to the HMS AP Meeting. Just to remind ourselves what we will be up to this afternoon, we started the conversation on Amendment 13 and the first of three parts before lunch. We will now dive into the second part, which will focus on the bluefin quota alternatives and the Purse Seine category alternatives. And then after a break, we'll come back to the third part, which will then be a little bit of a collection of other alternatives as well related to Amendment 13.

To any members of the public who are

here and haven't been on earlier, the conversation is among the advisory panel members but at 3:30, we will have an opportunity for public comment. We've got a half an hour set aside for that so encourage you to weigh in at that point if there are comments that you would like the panel and the HMS staff to hear. So that's the game plan, and we'll wrap up by 4:00.

So I will hand it back to Tom and as he did before, he'll tee up the conversation with an overview of the Amendment 13 alternatives, and then we'll open it up for conversation. So Tom, over to you.

MR. WARREN: Great. Thank you, Bennett. I will jump right in and share my screen. Let me scroll down. Okay.

MR. BROOKS: And we are seeing it not yet in present view, but I think you know that already.

MR. WARREN: Yes. Okay. How's that?

MR. BROOKS: Perfect.

MR. WARREN: Great. Now for some reason, it went to the first slide. This next part, in contrast to this morning's focus on the IBQ program, I'm going to zoom out and consider the broader context and scope of the whole fishery and the quota alternatives that pertain to all of the bluefin fishery and the different quota categories.

The first proposed measure would affect a relatively minor step in the annual quota allocation methods and specifically with regard to the 68-metric tons allocation to the Longline category. Annually, based since 2015, it's been 68 metric tons provided to the Longline category but instead of subtracting a fixed amount of each category, it adds up to 68 metric tons and would be allocated to the Longline category. We're proposing a simplified method that changes it from a two-step to a one-step process, so it would be basically a modification to the amount of percentage in each quota category, a relatively minor percentage. And I'll show you more details on that a little later.

This slide and the next slide pertain to the future of the Purse Seine category and how that relates to the overall bluefin quota allocation. The Purse Seine category has been relatively inactive for 15 years and has had no activity since 2015. So there's a couple practical implications of this. The first is if there is no activity under current rules, the Purse Seine category gets only 25 percent of its allocation, and the Purse Seine allocation is 18.6 percent of the total. So the Purse Seine category only gets 25 percent of that 75 percent of the Purse Seine category allocation does annually get reallocated to the reserve category and thereupon, it's available for distribution based on criteria to the rest of the fishery. So that 75 percent has not unused yet it's a source of uncertainty in that every year, NMFS has to make decisions how to dole out that quota as well as the fishing participants, there's uncertainty about how much and when NMFS might provide to each quota category from the Reserve.

The second implication is the 25 percent that remains with the Purse Seine category, the Purse Seine category, of course, is free to fish that or to lease it if they have not been fishing, and they lease approximately half of that 25 percent or up to half to the Longline category. So for the Longline category, it's a meaningful amount of quota that comes from the Purse Seine category in the form of leasing.

So with respect to the future of the Purse Seine category given its level of inactivity, these alternatives provide broad alternative frameworks for the future. The first -- and the proposed measure would be to immediately, upon implementation of Amendment 13, discontinue the Purse Seine category and reallocate upon implementation.

The other two alternatives would discontinue and reallocate the quota at a future sunset date two years after the implementation, so basically a delay in reallocation of the Purse Seine category. These two alternatives differ in what happens between now and the future sunset date. In the first, the Purse Seine category, keeping its 25 percent may lease quota or fish; and the second alternative, the Purse Seine may not fish but may lease. So again, when the Purse Seine category would go away basically and what happens in the meantime.

So this next slide shows, okay, regardless of whether the Purse Seine category is reallocated immediately or with a delay, these alternatives propose and describe how the reallocation would occur. So two alternatives that we're not proposing but were analyzed were reallocate proportionately to all categories including the Longline category. And this proportionately meaning based on the current percentages that each quota category has, they would get that relative percentage of the Purse Seine category.

And then under this, there's two sub-alternatives. One would provide the Longline category regardless of location to all geographical areas, and the other would provide Longline category only for use in the Atlantic out of concern for the Gulf of Mexico locations.

What we're proposing, in contrast, is to reallocate proportionately among only the directed categories, the General, Harpoon, Angling, and Reserve but not to the Longline or Trap category because they are incidental categories.

So this slide shows the current allocation amounts in percentages in contrast to the opposed. So under the last of the current percentages, you'll see from each quota category -- in comparing those percentages to the proposed. On the right, you'll see the orange Purse Seine category of 18.6 percent of the bluefin quota would no longer exist. Also of note in the proposed pie are the fact that all of the quota categories would receive greater amounts -- greater percentage amounts of the bluefin quota.

Now the Longline category percentage increased from 8.1 to 13.1, again, isn't because that Purse Seine quote would be reallocated to it, but that is because of the simplified method of reallocating the 68 metric tons. In other words, instead of getting a fixed tonnage around 68 metric tons, their percentage would be boosted slightly.

So this shows the proposed bluefin percentages in tabular form similar to the pie chart. So you'll notice on the left, the quota category, working to the right, the current percentages. The column A is the revised percentages resulting from that simplified 68 metric ton method so basically, a slight decrease in percentage rather than providing a fixed tonnage amount. But then more importantly, the right-hand column is the net revised proposed percentages. So for example, the General category would go from the current value -- it's 47.1 percent -- up to 55.8 percent; Purse Seine would go to zero; Harpoon category from 3.9 to 4.6; angling from 19.7 to 23.3; Longline from 8.1 to 13.1.

So the underlying question and issue regarding these reallocation options and specifically the reallocation of the Purse Seine quote to either the full fishery or to the directed fishery, the underlying issue with respect to specifically the Longline category with Longline fishery is how much quota does the Longline category need. So this next few slides and discussion is meant to try to shed light on some of the variables and some of the issues in play to inform our discussion.

So the reasons an active vessel needs IBQ -- and I key on the active vessel, inactive vessel arguably does not need IBQ because the goal of the IBQ program is to provide quota to account for bluefin by catch. So an inactive vessel not fishing does not need bluefin. The first reason, of course, is to satisfy the minimal amount required. On the first trip of each calendar quarter, a vessel is required to have a minimum amount of quota in the Gulf of Mexico and a separate minimum amount in the Atlantic. The principal reason, of course, a vessel needs IBQ is to account for moving catch, landings, or discards.

And then thirdly, though, vessels have expressed that they need and want bluefin quota as insurance against future catches of bluefin. It's highly uncertain how much, if at all, a vessel will catch but they may need some IBQ if they catch bluefin in the future.

So here's some first type of data to inform the discussion, leasing data from 2015 to 2020, going from left to right, the amount of Purse Seine quota that was leased by longline vessels, the total amount of quota leased, larger amount, and then the percent of total lease quota that was from Purse Seine participants. So you'll see from 2015 to 2020, the relative percentages. So in 2015, a relatively small percentage of the overall quota leased was from Purse Seine participants but in recent years, 2019 and 2020, 48 percent and 46 percent of the total lease quota was from Purse Seine participants.

Now looking at this in a different way, the bottom blue bars reflect the information I just showed in those percentages of overall leased amount from the Purse Seine. But this bar chart divides these longline leases into two categories; those from vessels that have been fishing, the active vessels in orange in contrast to those vessels that have not been fishing, inactive vessels in gray. And this is a new analysis that was not in the environmental impact statement.

So here the general trend from 2016 to 2020 is an increasing reliance on Purse Seine quota for leasing and an increasing reliance on inactive vessels that are not fishing. And this metric is valid because, you recall from this morning's discussion, the inactive vessels that have not been fishing would not be allocated quota. So this gets at the question or uncertainty of the bluefin market in the future is what will the leasing dynamics be; will vessels with quota want to hang onto all their quota or most of their quota as insurance against future catches, or will they lease it because in the past, there's an indication that the reliance on inactive vessels has been meaningful and contributed to the market in a meaningful way. So basically, the underlying question is, again, sources of these quota for active longline vessels and how those sources and dynamics would change under the proposed measure and what the leasing market would be like.

So another metric that's important, of course, is, okay, the amount of bluefin catch and the percent of quoted use. The landings are on the left followed by the discards, total catch, the adjusted quota, and the total percent of Longline quota. So the total percent of Longline quota used to account for bluefin catch has ranged from 34 percent to a high of 51 percent.

So trying to pull some of these metrics together, in answering the question, okay, what is the total amount of quota needed and how do these different pieces fit together, the catch has been, on average, from 2016 to 2020 45 percent of the quota. However, a portion of the catch is used to -- is accounted for by lease quota, and a portion of the catch is accounted for by the annual allocation. So the catch in leasing is not additive. It would be double-counting these quota because some of the lease quota is actually used for catch, and some is used for insurance.

So to try tease out these two different amounts in a method that makes sense, quota debt is a proxy for how much quota -- how much lease quota is actually used to account for catch versus is used as insurance, because quota debt represents after a vessel uses its quota, it goes into debt to account for catch. In all cases, a vessel has paid back its quota debt. So the only way to pay back quota debt is by leasing quota.

So if you're following, quota debt is a proxy for lease quota that is used to account for catch. So if we take the total of these quota and subtract this proxy, we're left with the adjusted leasing which is a proxy to represent insurance against future catches. So basically, this verbal mess I'm serving you is basically an effort to not double-count leasing and catch. So if you add leasing and catch had the minimum amount of 8 percent, what you're getting is a picture that the category has been using approximately 73 percent of its quota for these various uses.

So again, just some various data to help inform the discussion of how much IBQ the Longline category needs and how that relates to the considerations of whether the Purse Seine quota is reallocated to the Longline category.

So in terms of comments we received on related issues, we've received commends that support or do not support discontinuing the Purse Seine category and reallocation citing the Purse Seine category historical participation and option to fish as well as the reliance of the

Longline category on Purse Seine quota. There's been support for reallocating to directed categories only, and then there's been support for reallocating to all categories including Longline citing the need for longline vessels to provide the Purse Seine category for basing, concerns about the fairness of reallocating quota to the General category and not the Longline category given the differences in the fishery including the reporting requirements of the Longline category and the monitoring requirements.

And then a comment that there should be annual accountability in the IBQ program if the Longline category does not receive Purse Seine category quota. And you recall currently vessels have to balance the books on their IBQ accounts at the end of each quota or in order to fish during the next quota. So kind of like a credit card that comes due every quarter, you don't have to -- you can go into debt on a daily basis, but at the end of the quarter, you have to pay the bill rather than waiting to pay the IBQ bill, so to speak, at the end of the year.

So similar questions as this morning regarding the comments that do not support the measures. How do you prioritize such concerns or suggestions? What data or analyses might inform these considerations, or is there a new comment you'd like to provide?

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks, Tom, very much and we want to, again, open this up and have a conversation and hear different perspectives on this. I've got at least a couple of people in queue. I've got Marty and Scott and Dewey. And again, if you can -- as much as you can, speak to the questions that Tom has put out there for feedback, that would be great.

MR. SCANLON: Okay. Well, maybe we can do it the same we did it before there, Tom, if we can go back to the first slide and we'll -- I'll add my comments as we go through your presentation?

MR. BROOKS: Yes. That worked well, Marty. That be great.

MR. SCANLON: Okay. They modified my --- that, to me, is, you know, we're being paid with our own money right there. I mean that's really no -- that makes no difference whatsoever how you describe it or what you do with the allocation, it's really the same thing. That's what we've had, you know, so I mean to me, you know, to make it almost seem like we're getting an increase in our allocation by the category that's, you know -- again, that's almost insulting right there. I mean it is what it is. I mean we began to 68 metric ton, do it by whatever you want to, but it's really no gain to the pelagic longline industry from what it was. So we can leave that at that, all right.

No action Purse Seine category allocation. We're against discontinuing the Purse Seine category all together. I mean the 25 percent that has remained in the Purse Seine category is a very important component to the pelagic longline industry from the inception of A7 back in 2015. And one of the troubling things that I have -- and I mentioned this in my -- but you know, systematically subsetting the Gulf of Mexico, you look at this as an example right here. I mean we gave the Purse Seine -- HMS gave the Purse Seine category an option to either lease the quota or to catch the quota themselves. It was economically more feasible for them to lease the quota to us than to go through all the trouble of hiring observers, gearing up their boat, paying the crew and everything else to go catch it themselves, so they decided to lease the quota. Also, what I believe in the inception of A7 back in 2015, vessels that were considered to be leasing their quota were considered to be active, and they were able to get additional disbursals as a result of that. So to now tell these guys after they've been cooperative, and they've been a major component in A7 since its inception and keeping this thing, the program even moving forward -- without it, it would have been a complete disaster -- to now tell those guys that, you know, oh, you didn't actually fish the quota so now you're no longer active and we're taking all the quota from you, I don't think that's right. I mean they -- you know, they participated in the process. They've been active throughout A7 and give them -- leave them their, you know, their 25 percent and it's, like

I said, it's an important component to the pelagic longline industry.

In A13, some of the things that should have been done through the A7 through your review, we actually have a process there where we're trying to fix one portion of the problem, which is all the quotas sitting in the inactive vessels' hands and all the actives sitting in the no vessels' hands, and we're trying to revitalize this fishery, and what we got to remember is that the fishery has been contracting at 10 percent a year since 2015. So we're trying to fix one portion of it there, and we're going to break the other portion of it that's working, which is the leasing from the Purse Seines. So how is that going to be an addition? That's just going -- at best, it may neutralize it.

If you do get rid of the Purse Seine category all together and you don't give us that quota, -- it's a must that it becomes a year-end accountability because nobody's sitting on quota that's active. As you can see in those charts that Tom just gave, very little active vessels are leasing their quota. And when they are leasing their quota, it's usually at the end of the year or end of the surge of bluefin throughout the year that they're leasing their quota. They're not giving that quota up when there's the potential that they can be in the same position of the leasee -- or the leaser, you know, so that's not going to happen.

So I mean -- so you're going to be -- if you get rid of other Purse Seine category, you're going to be forced to go to year-end accountability, and that's just all there is to it. There's no other way so -- but we're against getting rid of that. I think that the Purse Seine is they've earned their -- they've earned their right to hold onto that quota by participating fully in A7. They've been staying with the pelagic longliners. They haven't hoarded that quota. They haven't overcharged us for that quota. They've been very cooperative and they've been -- and because of that, it's what made this whole process move forward from 2015 to the present day. So let's not break something that's actually working.

Next slide. As far as the

reallocation, you know, we're talking about the reallocation here, right? Is that the next --

MR. BROOKS: Yes.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. SCANLON: -- percentages?

MR. BROOKS: Yes.

MR. SCANLON: Listen, I believe that we should be getting not only that but we should be getting the 13.1 percent of whatever -- if whatever, there's 75 percent of that stuff, we should get 13.1 percent of that. What we need to remember is this. When A7 was started back in 2015, the reason why the Purse Seiners were only allowed to lease their quota to the pelagic longline industry was because it was declared commercial quota and could only be leased to commercial vessels. Now what you're trying to say is well, it's a directed fishery and now it's only going to go to directed fishery.

However, during the A7 process from the inception in 2015, through the back door, we would take a quota from the Purse Seines, put it into the Reserve, and we were leasing that quota to the recreational category, which I have no problem with if that's what -- you know, if that would work for those guys, that's fine. But now don't talk through both sides of your mouth by telling us well, it could only be given to directed fishermen because it's directed quota when back then, it was commercial quota should only be going to the commercial guys, and you were finding a way to give it to the recreational guys. So that's -- you know, we're not that stupid to be -- don't play us like that.

So we believe that, you know, the rest of the 75 percent should be divided up. You know, we should get our 13.1 percent or perhaps it should just be given equal to all of the categories equally.

I mean one of the problems that I have is, you know, the category that has been least accountable for their interactions, least responsible in their reporting and their compliance with A7 is the General category, and they get the greatest reward out of this. How do we continue to reward a category that is, on average, been 57 percent noncompliant with the regulations, and we're going to give them the biggest reward in reallocating this quota? I mean if nothing else, they should get no more allocation than anybody else. So I mean perhaps we should just take it and divide it up amongst all the categories equally. Maybe that's the best way to do that. I don't know but at the very least, we should be getting that 13.1 percent of that quota as well. Next slide.

We talk about the activity, the 276-pound and the 551 pounds account for insurance for future catches. Well, like I said, we're -- you know, like I said prior to this, I believe that we need to get rid of these -- it's time to get rid of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico designations. I mean we've just seen what you're attempting to do with the Purse Seine category here by systematically sunsetting the category.

What's to say down the road here now that, you know -- that Deep Water Horizon project has been on my -- that's been on my mind since its beginning. That was supposed to be a one-year program way back in 2015, and it's still going on today. And next -- last I heard, it's going to go on for another two more years. So that could go on forever, and who's to say that down the road there that all of a sudden, this is well, you know, you've been in the Deep Water Horizon project and you really haven't longlined anymore, so you're no longer a longline, so we're not giving you that category anymore, you're no longer an active pelagic longliner so we're just going to decide that that's going to be the end of this for you, too? And if you do that -- right now I believe there's only 11 or 12 active vessels with quota sitting in the Gulf of Mexico that can be leased to boats in the Atlantic for use in the Atlantic.

Now if those boats start leasing that, they're going to be very hesitant to lease anymore quota because they may not get quota. And systematically, when you reduce their quota to the point where there's no more quota being reallocated each year, you're essentially going to sunset the, you know, the access to the Gulf of Mexico to the pelagic longline industry, and we're right on the cusp of that happening.

And on top of this, I might remind you that I've said this from the beginning, that the purpose -- one of the purposes, I believe, to re-designate that Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico was to protect Deep Water Horizon from having to compensate the rest of the Atlantic -- rest of the pelagic longline industry who are dramatically affected by what happened in the Gulf of Mexico, because those are highly migratory species. And it has had a long-term effect and it's part of the reason why we have ASEP, is because of what happened over there.

So I mean to me, it's time to get rid of the re-designation of that. It should be just Atlantic. Don't worry about -- there's a 35 percent cap over there. That's the end of it. You know, I don't see -- and I don't see a surge ---

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. BROOKS: Hey, Marty?

MR. SCANLON: -- there.

MR. BROOKS: Marty, I want you just to try to wrap up a little bit just so I can --

MR. SCANLON: All right.

MR. BROOKS: -- there are a bunch of people (simultaneously speaking) --

MR. SCANLON: We can go to the next slide.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah, and I just want to address one more thing already brought up a couple times related to the Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project, which we've had presentations before the AP about in the past.

And from its inception, it was intended to be -- the length of this project was based upon a target of about 60 vessel years, which meant one vessel participation for one year makes a vessel year, so with any combination of vessels and years to get to that level of length of a project in order to accomplish the restoration goals that it was designed for.

And so it began in 2017. It is not infinite in length. It will be coming to an end, and we are getting closer to that end.

MR. SCANLON: Do you have an idea when that'll happen, Randy, by chance? What's the projection on that ending?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: I think that -- the actual ending will depend upon the final amounts of participation, but at least at this point, I think it's thought that it will go at least one more year.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. All right. Let's go to Scott Taylor. And, again, if folks can be --

MR. TAYLOR: I don't want to be too redundant over what Marty said, but the numbers are somewhat misleading. And I think that there's a major point in there that Tom may not have taken into consideration, which is that essentially, every single one of the active vessels has got to maintain 300 pounds and change.

And that 300 pounds and change is really more like four to five hundred pounds because that's really what the average size fish has been. And it's not in --- it's indirectly. While the reserves is only a mandatory number of pounds that are being addressed in the whole weight number, when we ran the fish, we have to do a conversion back over to dressed.

So, if you take the total number of active boats and figure probably need to do some scooping up -- okay? At 500 pounds of holding, it really has to be sort of in reserve. Unless everybody is perfect to the last day of the last year for the last trip, essentially you're going to have -- I don't know. If there's, you know, 90 active boats, that's 50,000 pounds. That's 25 metric tons that essentially have to be calculated into the -- on top of the number that is being held for the catch number.

So they're much closer to the cap that you guys really are looking at because of the fact that that has to be maintained. And I don't know of anybody that's perfect at the end of the year and essentially has zero in their account. I mean, we really have to go into the year over year and surrender part of it as a general rule.

So it's inherently problematic when we sit here and -- what's interesting is that also, probably because you don't have all the numbers yet, or 2021 numbers -- 2020 was a down year for a lot of reasons in particular. And we've had more than one comments about how prolific these fish have been this year.

So my concern is that they're trying to force our (audio interference), okay? Which is that there's probably a few things that are going to go on that are going to impact this fishery. The NMFS seems to be encouraged with the deep-set fisheries, particularly off of North Carolina. And there have been a lot of bluefin landings there already in North Carolina. And now the way that that fishery has been able to survive the bluefin this year is I know for a fact that there's a particular company that has worked with the purse seine quota to essentially acquire a quota for those fishermen that were bringing in deep-set fish. It's a byproduct of that particular fishery.

And I think the numbers, you know, will minimizes turtles and other things. There's still a component of bluefin going along with the fishery, which is fine. There's no issue, really, with that.

But we can only see you're not taking into account the fact that the work that you guys are doing and that we're doing collectively at ICCAT is bearing fruit. And the larger these populations are of the fish, the more resilient and then the numbers come back, the more likely that we are to have interactions again.

So it's essentially that if you're taking away the vast majority of the available quotas might -- again, I think this is the final point, that -- if you go back to the slide where it shows the 20 percent of the -- to the active -- so the active 20 percent, if you're going to eliminate -- and those numbers hold true and don't continue to climb, then my guess is that in 2021, they're going to be higher than 2019.

If you're essentially eliminating 80 percent of the quota that was leased because as (audio interference), any of the boats that are now in that 66 vessel category that are going to get the higher level of allocation cannot afford to give away that quota until they absolutely know that that quota is not available because none of the other categories are going to be available to lease.

You've taken all the profit out of this. You're going to have boats sitting in dock, this time for sure, because there's no place to turn other than to the boats that you're allocating them the lion's share of the 22. And they are not going to want to lease.

There's a lot of, let's just say, industry competitiveness at that level, the bigger boats, you know. I don't really need to name names for you. You guys know who they are, the bigger producers out there. If they end up with the lion's share of the quota, they can't afford to have their ability to fish interrupted.

It's going to be the smaller guys that are out there that are going to be scrambling and not have any place to turn to be able to get the quota. This is the most important thing that's on our agenda right now. Anybody who understands that we want to be as efficient as we possibly can with the use of this thing -- we've had a system that was working up to this point.

While it may have some inefficiencies that are in it, they're not as much being betrayed because of that reserve. That 380 pounds across the active vessels is a big number collectively, and it's not being included with any of that because by your own design, it has to be surrendered at the end of the year.

You can't expect the big boats are going to go into the end of the year with zero quota if they're actually fishing. So I would really implore you to think very carefully about what it is that you're doing here because we can't afford any more hiccups. We cannot. Okay?

This is just another new thing that has the potential to turn into a (audio interference) to limit the ability for this fleet to maneuver and to be productive. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Scott.

I'm going to -- just to bring in another sector here, Rick Weber, I'm going to bring you in, and then we'll go back to some other commercial folks.

MR. WEBER: Once again, I'm not sure I'm speaking for another sector. Everyone wants more bluefin. There's no doubt about it. But A7 did indeed use the purse seine as a relief valve when we went into IBQ.

And I think we have to tie this section in with the last -- I want to say act -- first presentation, because when we look at the tier system and when we look at the poundage system, and now we're getting rid of the free market insurance policy, everyone is, again, going to land as many pounds as possible because they need to get to tier 2 or tier 1.

And no one's going to know who else has how much poundage, and it's going to be a derby to be tier 2 and above to have enough poundage to make sure that you have the IBQ. This just feels like free market responses that are, again, predictable.

By the same token, I've been here long enough. I know why we got here. When we contemplated putting longlines onto the fixed percentage when there was a cut, the longlines didn't want to hear about a cut because it was all accidental catch, and there was no way for them to reduce the number of accidents.

So I acknowledge the history and how we got here. Are we, Tom, using the full quota? I'm sorry. With all of the numbers and percentages and leases, at the end of the year, is the longline using all of the tonnage that is being proposed?

MR. WARREN: And that's where it gets tricky. Using -- it depends what you mean by used. To account for bluefin catch, no. The range is between 34 and 51 percent. But the quota is also, as strongly stated, used for insurance against other catches.

So that adds into the percentage numbers --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. WEBER: That's what I thought I was understanding. I wasn't sure. That is what I thought I was understanding. And that leads me, then, to support end-of-year accounting rather than quarterly accounting because, once again, I am very sympathetic to the argument that no one's going to give up their quota midseason. At the end of the season, they would.

And, by the way, if the industry went over, it may be a game of musical chairs that the people who went badly over can't fix their problem, which is an interesting thing. I mean, the industry would resolve its own bad actors problem by not fixing their quota.

I don't know. I don't know this well enough. I have a fairness issue with the dramatic changes from A7 to A13. I feel like that purse seine quota was held out there as the relief valve, and in the middle of a big switch, we're also taking away the relief valve.

I admit you have lots to look at, and I'm not sure I have firm answers. But I'm sympathetic to their problems.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. So, Rick, if I can sum up, sort of -- which I think you just did -- is you may not know what the fix is, but the preferred approach feels like it has a fairness issue and a sort of effectiveness and implementation --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. WEBER: Exactly. Thank you, Bennett.

MR. BROOKS: Yeah. Thanks.

Dewey, let's go to you. You're open, Dewey. Yep. We gotcha.

MR. HEMLIRIGHT: Yeah, I would just like to echo support. A part of being able to use the purse seine category is a relief valve if necessary. And, also, it is kind of troubling that -- looking at rewarding a user group that doesn't report or has very low compliance with reporting. And so that could be a care to make them report more or something.

But the pelagic longline industry needs relief valves, and we need the purse seine quota, parts of it, to build and continue mixing this up as our fisheries or our participants are evolving in different things to the folks that are left. Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Dewey.

George Purmont, why don't you jump in?

MR. PURMONT: Can you hear me okay?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, we gotcha.

MR. PURMONT: Thank you. I -- really, where to begin except the beginning? I spent a long, long time dealing with purse seining, which I was a participant in in 1967. And it was sort of assumed that it would be phased out given a number of kick-the-can-down-the-road sunsets.

I don't see rewarding purse seiners -- and I'm a seiner -- for nonparticipation. I don't see that. I never thought it was the intent of National Marine Fisheries to give them a 401(k) plan and a lease format specifying that specifically only the longliners could be the recipients.

I guess I've got a couple of questions. And one is can highly migratory species take the purse seine quota and actually lease it to the longlines?

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. BROOKS: -- quota goes to the -- is held by the program and is leased out.

MR. PURMONT: Right. In other words, take the same quota. Tell the seiners, hey, you know, you might be living the life down in Florida, but what's happening on the ground here is that this quota -- you're not earning it.

Whatever your reward is that allows you to continue, whether you contribute it to science, whether you contribute it to an industry as far as seining and establishing quotas and stuff like that -- can highly migratory species actually acquire the purse seine quota and lease it independently to the longliners up to a certain point, and then the rest of it gets put into the general reserve at their discretion so that it actually leased quota at an agreed-upon price from the government? Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: So the issue, George, is you want to make it available, but it doesn't feel right to you that the purse seine is sort of benefitting from this at this point?

MR. PURMONT: Exactly.

MR. BROOKS: Randy or Tom, do either one of you want to weigh in on that question?

MR. WARREN: I'll let Randy weigh in.

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. BROOKS: How gracious of you, Tom.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: There's probably more than one HMSer that might want to weigh in on this particular thing, and I'll take a shot, at least for now. And that is to say that -- so what you're talking about there, George, I think would take a completely separate initiative of rulemaking or to set up the provisions or to do something like that.

I think there would be a lot of consideration about legal obligations and a lot of administrative cost that would be associated with that. It's not something that I think that we have been inclined to go down the road on.

Brad came on. I can see that. I'm

glad he did because he certainly has been a big part of the early discussions, what went to Amendment 13, and I'm sure that this actually has been considered before.

But, Brad, do you want to say anything?

MR. McHALE: Sure. And thank you, everyone, for their feedback and insight as far as how these programs need to evolve to meet the needs of the respective fisheries.

During the Amendment 7 process, this topic of having, for lack of better way to explain it, a safety net was discussed at some length. And the record will show that I know Tom and both myself have spoken to a number of different options.

One was that with the lack of actual fishing on -- part of the purse seine is we didn't want to sunset them at that time but to allow the door to remain open. We now know that all the historical participants are no longer active or have indicated at times to be active, hence why in Amendment 13 it's proposed to sunset that fishery because we're not necessarily proponents of having armchair fishermen having control over other fishermen for economic gain.

That isn't just in HMS fisheries. That's kind of across the board, the agency as a whole. But saying that, it is not lost on the dynamic when IBQ was stood up that we had two categories that had individual vessel quotas to allow for some level of leasing to mitigate any growing pains that we all felt by introducing a new management regime to mitigate the bycatch of bluefin tuna in the pelagic longline fishery.

As we've continued to move down the process of lessons learned and trying to adapt, I guess, George, the short answer is yes, that could be an option that the agency holds some sort of quota in reserve that has the sole purpose of covering longline bycatch. But I think Randy just hit it on the head.

That would transcend the scope of what has been put forward in Amendment 13 and would incur significant need for dialogue on how that then, in turn, would be managed to mitigate various levels of subjectivity to make sure that there was equity, that all of a sudden somebody like Brad McHale didn't go out and disregard some of the goals of Amendment 7 to curtail effort that may result in bluefin bycatch and say, screw it; the Fisheries Service will bail me out.

And, therefore, it erodes that game that we've all kind of experienced both domestically and internationally over the years. So there's challenges there. But just as strong as an option is to look at other parts of the agency and fisheries, fisheries management, and how the industry has also stood up their own safety nets where quota or permits have been essentially consolidated into what's kind of referred to as banks.

And so it's no longer an agency/industry relationship to provide that safety net, but it's industry to industry. I think something that's behind the intent of this proposal here is -- one is that you don't necessarily have one defunct category that then has economic gain over another that is actively fishing, but also then to further explore how do you then mitigate third parties, whether it be agency or other categories in the management of the pelagic longline fishery to allow more self-sustainability on how that category's quota is managed as a whole?

So that's kind of a very long-winded response to George. We kind of tackle some of the history, some of the options that have been discussed, and again, some of the dialogue as we try to figure out this way forward to make sure that the category as a whole has its needs met. But we also don't necessarily erode the gains that were achieved in Amendment 7.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Brad.

We are starting to get a little bit tight on time here, and I've still got several people who want to jump in here. So let me try to get to a few more people. I think we'll push a little bit beyond our 2:30 planned break, but we're going to start to run up against a clock.

Steve, Steve Getto, why don't you jump in? And then we'll get to Jeff Oden.

MR. GETTO: It's a tough pill for any commercial fisherman to swallow to see that any quota that they've been using being given to a recreational sector that hasn't made the sacrifices to see this fishery recover.

You've got to remember that a large component of the recreational fishery, the charter/headboats, benefit from this quota remaining commercial. So I really feel that the commercial fishery should have access to this quota, and it should not go to the recreational sector.

And, if anything, give yourselves some flexibility and continue to keep it in the reserve. So --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. BROOKS: Keep it with commercial.

MR. GETTO: Keep it with commercial.

MR. BROOKS: And maybe hold it close for a little -- to give the agencies a little room. Okay.

MR. GETTO: Exactly.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks.

Jeff?

(Pause.)

MR. BROOKS: Have we opened up Jeff?

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Yeah. Jeff, you should be open, or you should have a request to open.

MR. ODEN: Can you hear me now?

MR. BROOKS: Yeah, we got you now.

MR. ODEN: It seems like where we're headed -- to me, once it's allocated, it's likely forever. You know? There's probably not going to be any going back without bloodshed. I don't mean that literally by any means. I'm just being truthful.

I mean, nobody's going to want to give up quota they ended up with. And nobody needs it worse than our industry. There's been a lot of talk over the last few days about the resurgence of bluefin up and down the coast. Well, that's good for all the anglers and the General cat guys. It's not necessarily good for us if we have a future. And to where I see this going, it's just scary without this 25 percent minimum relief valve.

Secondly, one other thing I'd like to comment on is, with the tier system, how is a young individual -- when we speak of revitalization of this fishery, how is a young individual going to work his way into this with five or six hundred pounds without continually having his hand in his pocket?

I mean, it's bad enough for those that are in here. I see I've been demoted. Anyway, so it's going to be tough in my corner, but I can't even see how somebody would contemplate coming into this fishery. And I've made mention of that before. You talk about lack of participation anymore and the fishery declining. Well, you're responsible for that.

Secondly, or thirdly, end-of-year accountability, that is a must. It is an absolute must because not a one of us that I know of are going to come off quota until, at the very earliest, November. In years past, I used to catch bluefin in November. The last six or seven, it hasn't seemed like we've seen them until maybe early January.

But it's not to say that won't change, just like it did this year when, once on the point -- in my 21 or 23 years, I've never once seen bluefin on the point in the tide on the West Wall in July. This year, I did. So everybody's seeing the resurgence. And if anybody needs that quota, it's our industry, and especially if we have a future. The future is in your hands. I thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Jeff.

All right. I got three people who haven't had a chance to jump in yet and about six minutes. If I do that math, I come out with two minutes each.

Alan Weiss?

MR. WEISS: Thanks, Bennett.

I think the problem here is that the question has been framed the wrong way. The issue that we're trying to attack is how do we facilitate the functioning of the IBQ leasing market? And we had a discussion of one part of that this morning, and now we're having a discussion of another part of it.

But what we really need to know is how those two major parts interact with one another. And what I've come to as I'm listening to this discussion is that, basically, in Amendment 13, you've tried to undertake changing two huge pillars of that IBQ leasing system at the same time. I don't think that makes sense.

There's a lot of support for making the changes that we discussed this morning, to shift quota away from inactive vessels in the initial allocation and allocate it to active vessels. It doesn't make sense to make that big change and, at the same time, make this big change to the availability of the purse seine quota when it's really hard to tell -- it looks like it would completely collapse the market for leasing IBQ.

But we really need a better handle on how these two moves will interact with one another. And my recommendation at this point would be to completely put any changes in the purse seine leasing system that's been running for the last several years -- put that off until there can be a future analysis of a whole bunch of other possibilities, some of which were discussed just a few minutes ago, and really do this thoughtfully and carefully so that we don't make a huge mistake that ends up screwing up the whole works.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Alan.

MR. WEISS: Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks.

Tim, take it. Again, a minute or two would be great.

MR. PICKETT: Yeah, I'm not going to reiterate what everyone else has already said that I'm very much on board with. But I would say at the very least -- and I'm saying at the very least -- this reallocation of the purse seine quota needs to be discretionary, and it needs to be annually discretionary.

Jeff touched on the point earlier saying, once you allocate that quota to somebody, it never comes back. And I think -- well, it would be hard fought, he said, to come back. And I think, personally, it'll never come back.

And with all the changes and stuff, I think at the very least, that needs to be a discretionary accounting. You know, kind of keep that parachute there for a while. If this is in fact going to happen, it needs to be a discretionary reserve sort of thing, at least for the interim, if that is in fact going to happen, which I hope it doesn't.

But that's my --

(Simultaneous speaking.)

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tim.

MR. PICKETT: Yep.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks.

David Schalit? David, you're open.

MR. SCHALIT: It's 2:33 right now. I'm prepared to wait until after we come back from the break.

MR. BROOKS: Well, when we come back from the break, we're picking up a different topic. So --

MR. SCHALIT: Well, so we can actually cover -- this is a complex issue here. So --

MR. BROOKS: Oh, I know.

MR. SCHALIT: -- I think it deserves the time.

MR. BROOKS: I understand. I'm just -- I know there's other issues. I know we're going to have public comment. I think what we might do is see whether we have much public comment, and if not, come back to it after that. But we need to -- we need to hit the 3:30 mark for public comment to be respectful of that. So that's where we --

MR. SCHALIT: All right. I'll tell you what. I'll do my best, you know, and -- okay. First of all, I was in an SCRS meeting most of the morning, and so I came in late here. And I'm wondering, how is all of this discussion going to change the schedule for Amendment 13? I missed that.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Let me let Randy or Tom just quickly answer that question.

MR. WARREN: Extension of the public comment period essentially modified our target date of implementation, delaying it by a year.

MR. BROOKS: Go ahead, David.

MR. SCHALIT: Okay. My second question is -- by the way, thank you for your presentation. The two-year interval that you mentioned in those various options -- and I forget which page number it was -- what purpose does that two-year interval serve? Am I being clear with you?

MR. WARREN: Yes. I mean, arguably, it's a slow way to make changes and see what happens.

MR. SCHALIT: Ah, okay. Okay. That's

good. Okay. My next question is, there was a problem that was mentioned some time ago in connection with some vessels -- some pelagic longline vessels that were inactive or maybe only relatively inactive that we're holding onto their IBQs and not leasing them. Has this been addressed? Or has a solution been discussed in this connection?

MR. WARREN: That solution would be in the dynamic allocation. If a vessel is not fishing, it would get very little IBQ. So the IBQ allocation is sensitive to the amount of fishing. So somebody didn't have much quota to lease if they weren't fishing.

MR. SCHALIT: Noted. What if they did, like, two or three sets in a year's time; would that -- you know, would that not exacerbate the issue?

MR. WARREN: They would have a very low level of quota.

MR. SCHALIT: Okay. Okay. Okay. Last question. Institutionalized underage -- has any thought been given to how we could reduce this? This is a Rich Ruais term, which relates to the fact that every single year, going back since time immemorial, the U.S. is not able to capture -- catch its full quota.

And we hear about this all the time at ICCAT where they say, "Well, the U.S. can't possibly have a lot of abundance. They can't catch their quota." But in actual fact, it's a regulatory issue. And I'm wondering if in the process of discussing all of this that issue came up.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Tom? Randy?

MR. WARREN: That has not been one of the alternatives developed, but one of the objectives does address our ATCA and Magnuson mandates for optimal yield. So that's kind of always in the background.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Let me add to that, that, you know, within the overall U.S. quarter we go through an exercise of looking at the umbrage, and then the allowable carry forward of a portion of that umbrage that we then have available, an adjusted quota in the following year, which facilitates continued use or maximizing that use. But we do manage the overall quota to get as close to, but not exceed, that level on an annual basis.

Brad, can you add anything to that?

MR. BROOKS: Brad, if you can --

MR. McHALE: If I could, and I know we're short on time here, but just reflecting back to kind of what I had stated earlier that as an underlying theme of how Amendment 7 in the IBQ program was set up, and how we were addressing inactive vessels, so those are vessels that didn't actually have permits associated with them, that we didn't award allocations, even if they qualified for a share, again, to meet that kind of overarching goal that we didn't have armchair captains that were leveraging those that were actually getting lines wet in the fishery.

So that applied really to kind of a Purse Seine proposal, but also how the IBQ program was originally implemented.

David, to your point, when you have vessels that have IFQs, individual fishing quotas, it becomes very problematic of when the agency or other needs of the United States can then retrieve that quota.

So that leads to some of that institutionalized underharvest where you have this mixed use fishery where there are open access fisheries as well as these limited access that have direct allocations. And, hence, some of the struggle that we're trying to continue to navigate.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Brad.

All right. I do need to get us a break. Mike Pierdinock, you appear not -- you have not been able to jump in here. I'll give you 30 seconds here. Okay?

MR. PIERDINOCK: (Audio interference) brief. The recreational and for-hire community has been targeting bluefin tuna going back to the early 1900s. With guys and gals in suits and ties in big charter boats going out and landing bluefin back in the early 1900s, you were able to land them recreationally. And back then they were able to sell them.

The reason why today we continue to have our historical access to that quota, either recreationally or to sell it commercially for the for-hire -- as a for-hire vessel. I would hope that -- or I see that that continues to be (audio interference) of the quota to all of the different gear types. It needs to be fair and reasonable, and it's reasonable that other gear types would be -- have access to the same.

And with that, we recreationally or for-hire need the same -- have that same access and have equitable inclusion in that quota.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. All right. So I know we need to get to break. I will just say, you know, first of all, thanks for all of the comments. This is obviously not an easy issue to solve. I will just say that there were I think a pretty strong set of concerns raised here around loss of a safety valve, around equity, around the history, you know, around the likelihood that large producers will hold on to that quota and not make it available for leasing until the end of the year if there were such a switch.

There also were a number of possible solutions thrown on the table. One is if you did a shift, you'd have to have end-of-the-year accounting for this to work. Ideas about, you know, maybe just keep it as is, and, you know, that the Purse Seine category continues to have that allocation available -- to make available for leasing.

That the agency might be able to play some role as a safety valve there, though we heard concerns about that as well. That if you did distribute it, that you would want to do it at least in a discretionary way each year, so that it didn't become sort of an allocation that would be hard to retrieve back.

And then coming around, you know, maybe you want to rethink doing two big changes in -- at the same time, and, you know, give one some time to play out.

So other points, too, but I think those are the main themes I heard. Again, Tom or Randy, if there's anything you want to fold in here before we go to break.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: No, thank you.

MR. BROOKS: All right. Thanks, everybody. What I think I want to do is just give us a very short break. Let's come back at 10 of, which will just put us about five minutes behind, but there really are still a number of alternatives to be discussing.

Then we'll go to public comment at 3:30. And if that winds up being a short set of comments, we can come back and reopen any of the topics that we have talked about.

Does that work, Randy?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: All right.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Great. Let's go to break, then, and we'll start back up with Part 3 at 10 of. So just about seven minutes from now. Thanks, everybody.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. It is 10 of, so I think we should get back into it. We want to turn to the last of the three parts. Again, there are several other alternatives that are part of Amendment 13 and want to give Tom a chance to, as he has done before, kind of walk through the alternatives, and then open it up for discussion.

So, Tom, back to you and seeing your screen, and you are now presenting. Good.

MR. WARREN: Okay. Can you hear me?

MR. BROOKS: Yep. You're all good.

MR. WARREN: Okay. So this last section deals with other alternatives and specifically focusing on behavior fisheries. So with respect to the General category, and specifically modifications to the subquota periods for allocations, is the main scope of the analyses in the DEIS.

We are not proposing any changes with respect to either the subquota time periods listed in the first column nor the associated percentage allocations of that subquota period. So January through March we would still get 5.3 percent; September, 26.5 percent, as an example.

Some of the other alternatives analyzed in the DEIS but not conferred dealt with changes in the time periods, such as 12 equal months, or extending the January through March subquota period until the end of April, or several alternatives dealt with changes to the subquota percentages.

So without changing the time periods, changing the allocation percentages associated, for example, increasing the January through March subquota or increasing the amounts for the September and for the October through November subquota period with corresponding decreases in the June through August amount to basically fund those increases.

And if reallocation of Purse Seine quota occurred to the General category, a caveat that couldn't be put in the September and October through November time periods and not during earlier portions of the year. So, again, these are General category alternatives analyzed but not conferred.

So I'm going to show some relevant data to the consideration of these alternatives. This shows you for 2018 General category trip locations. We don't get trip locations on a continual basis, but we do as a result of special studies such as the General category cost earnings database. And this shows you the pretty typical patterns of trip locations concentrating off New England and off North Carolina.

So the next few slides I'll show you are relevant information in the DEIS to help compare metrics across quota periods. As you are aware, management of the General category fishery through the use of potential limits, time periods, quotas, and subquotas, enclosures, is a complex business. Because of the nature of the fishery, it is highly variable from year to year, and the location of the fish are variable during the year, of course migrating up and down the east coast.

And so the question of how you standardize numbers and really grapple with what is going on in the fishery is of utmost importance. So in the next few slides, we use metrics to try to, again, standardize what is going on in the fishery and compare metrics. And one can't rely on a single metric alone, but it's kind of through a combination of evaluation of metrics that you can get a handle on this fishery.

This first table is number of unique vessels landing at least one bluefin. And, again, these are commercial landings by General category, vessels, or Charter/Headboat category vessels that have declared their intent to land commercial bluefin.

So this compares the quota category -- excuse me, the subquota periods, the number of vessels landing at least one bluefin. So you can see greater numbers of vessels land bluefin during the mid-portion of year in contrast to the earlier months of January, March, and the later months of December.

The number of days the fishery was open 2016 through 2019, so the first column shows the subquota period, and the number of days in that subquota period, and then in the columns for 2016 through 2019, the number of days the fishery was open.

So taking 2019 as an example, the January through March subquota period was opened 59 days out of 93 days, which is, you know, 55 percent maybe. The June through August was open 69 days out of 92 days; September, 13 out of 31; October/November, 13 out of 35; and, in 2019, 31 days out of 31.

So, again, another metric that is trying to standardize the information to allow comparing across subquota periods, and that are in some ways indicators of fishing opportunity.

Commercial bluefin in metric tons landed per day open -- again, the subquota period in the left-hand column. So the amount of bluefin landed per day open, kind of a rate of landings that takes into account two of the variables, amount landed and number of days open, again, try to represent fishing opportunity.

So you can see the number of bluefin per day open in 2019 is quite a bit higher in September and October and November than during the other months of the year, June through August, is higher than in January through March, the lowest being 0.7.

The commercial bluefin landed per unique vessel that landed is another take on some of the underlying data. So, again, amount of bluefin landed per vessel that landed, of those successful vessels, how much did they land? And this gives a picture that the vessels landing at least one bluefin landed more than the other subquota periods.

So without delving and discussing those metrics, I am going to switch gears to the angler category trophy fishery. You will recall that the Angling category trophy fishery is an incidental fishery allocated a relatively small amount of trophy fishery to the Angling category; that is, greater than 73-inch fish that are normally the commercial size category.

But given that the Angling category that targets a smaller sized class, between 27 and 73 inch, does incidentally catch these larger fish, this fishery is basically carved out to reduce bycatch and allow some catch of this trophy size fish.

It is a relatively small amount of quota divided currently among three different geographic areas -- the Gulf, north, and the south. This proposed measure would try to create a little bit more opportunity vessels in the northern aspect, the northern location of this northern area, because typically the northern Angling category trophy quota is harvested before the fish even get to northern New England.

So this would subdivide the current northern area into two zones, north and south, off Chatham, Massachusetts, with the net result of four trophy category zones and each with an associated equal amount of quota, again, to provide a little bit of opportunity for those vessels in the north.

To fund this quota, it would increase a portion of the Angling category that is allocated for the trophy fishery and have an equivalent reduction for the large school/small medium. So, again, not an increase to the overall amount allocated to the Angling category, but taking from a portion of the Angling category, which is already divided up by size classes, changes how those size classes are subdivided.

So here is the proposed area in blue. The current northern area is the light and dark blue. This would divide it up into two areas, the Gulf of Maine in dark blue, southern New England in light blue.

Other modifications to the handgear fisheries address harpoon fishery. We are not proposing any change to the authorized gears. The draft environmental impact statement does analyze the use of harpoon gear on Charter/Headboat permitted vessels not currently allowed, and we are not proposing this change.

And it also analyzes the removal of harpoon gear as an authorized gear for the General category vessels. Currently, General category vessels are allowed to use harpoon gear, and under the proposed measures this would not change.

We are proposing a modification to the Harpoon category daily retention limit. Currently, there is a limit on the small -- excuse me, the large medium fish and there is no limit on the giant bluefin.

The whole fishery, the Harpoon category, is under of course a quota. So in order to provide a little bit more opportunity, either extend the time period of the quota or the number of vessels fishing, this would constrain the total amount of fish available to harpoon category vessels at 10 fish per day or trip. So the combined large medium fish and giant bluefin would be constrained to 10 total.

The Harpoon category season we are not proposing any changes. We would maintain the current start and closure date. The current start date, instead of changing, would remain the same. Excuse me. This other alternative listed below in blue analyzed would set an earlier date of May 1 instead of June 1, but we'd still close on November 15th. But, again, we are not proposing a change to the length of the harpoon season.

And last but not least, changes in permit categories are allowed under the current rules. A vessel, if they make a mistake in their application for a permit, such as a vessel wanting to enroll in the angling category, but makes a mistake and instead enrolls in the General category and gets the wrong permit type, they are able to make this change provided they request it within 45 days.

We are proposing that this restriction is relaxed, so that for vessels issued an open access permit would be allowed to change permit categories at any time due to errors, provided the vessel has not landed any bluefin.

A summary of the comments received are for the General category support for the no-action alternative as we proposed, support for creating a separate August subquota, support for providing the increase from a Purse Seine reallocation only to the September through December subquota periods.

With respect to the angling category, support and lack of support for the proposed trophy areas. Requests to allocate more quota in fact to the trophy category overall and to the trophy subquota, and concern about how the increase to the trophy subquota is being dealt with, concern about this slight decrease in the large -- small medium subquota that would occur in conjunction, support for these trophy category areas, but also some new ideas, support for moving the southern line further south to Ocean City, Maryland, or another idea, to divide the trophy in this trophy south also into two areas.

So, again, similar comments to the Advisory Panel as we posed this morning.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Great. Thanks very much, Tom.

We've got about 25 minutes to chew on this. Let's see what comments AP have or questions. Peter Chaibongsai and then David Schalit. And, Peter, star three if you're on the phone.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Can you guys hear me?

MR. BROOKS: We've got you.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay. Thank you. This is a question on General category information. Alan and I were kind of going back and forth on this, so we're just hoping for some clarification.

If you're fishing in tournaments, are we allowed -- is the angling community allowed to land any and all types of billfish and tuna in those tournaments? And will those be counted towards the General category?

MR. WARREN: I'm going to defer to Brad or somebody who is a little more adept at answering those kind of billfish questions than maybe.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Thank you.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah. So just a clarification, I think that actually would be a -- in the ballpark of a regulatory question because I don't think it's really covered in Amendment 13.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: I'm sorry, guys. There's just something that Alan and I were just trying to find, and we wanted to make sure that we understood this aspect well. I'm sorry about that.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah. Sure. It's not a problem. But I'll answer as quick as I can. So --

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Sure.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: -- the permit category of vessels when they are fishing in a registration of tournament -- fish in that tournament under the angling category rules for other species besides tuna. They would still be in the General category for tuna. But for the others they fish under the angling rules which would apply for billfish and sharks and swordfish. And so all of those angling requirements would apply.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Thanks, Randy.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Sorry, one last thing. Thank you, Randy. And I think -- I didn't have a chance to speak up on it last time because we were running out of time, and I knew I'd have a little bit of time now. So just really quickly, on the -- basically this goes to the last part of the presentation.

But since we are talking about angling a little bit, I wanted to bring it up now, too, is when we are talking about some of the allocation of -- or reallocation of the IBQs to -- obviously, we would love -- and I think Mike brought it up, too, the history of the angling community participating in this sport.

We would obviously love to have it -- to have it in all regions, and I think you mentioned specifically here just essentially within the New England area. We would love to -- and our constituents would love to have it throughout all regions, so not just the north -- the northeast.

And I think, Tom, you brought it up to where sometimes before you brought this -- within Amendment 13, excuse me, because a lot of the fish were being caught before they got to New England, vice versa could be said for the Gulf of

Mexico, too. So that's one area that we would look at potentially increasing with that reallocation.

So thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. David Schalit, you are briefing --

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Before we go there, I want to kind of address this. I think, Peter, you may be conflating a couple of things here.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: And just to kind of -- and, Tom, you can help me out, but related to redistribution of Purse Seine and the alternatives in Amendment 13 related to that, if it was redistributed to all categories, there are sub-alternatives under that alternative that make a distinction for the Longline category and whether, then, the Longline category, when they receive that, if it would then be distributed without geographic distinction, meaning anywhere -- Atlantic or Gulf -- or the other sub-alternative is there would be a distinction between the Atlantic and the Gulf. But that's for the longline.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay. My understanding from what I read -- and I apologize. So, Tom, if you can clarify that, I apologize. This is on the last series of slides. I thought that meant if it was redistributed through all categories. It could be redistributed for all categories within the three different regions in the Atlantic.

So if that's not the case, if you could just clarify that. If it's just for longline, if that's what you're saying, Randy, that's not what I got from the presentation. So I apologize.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Okay. So in the trophy category -- I'm going to let Tom speak to this, but --

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: -- he can clarify on this.

MR. WARREN: Overall, with respect to the reallocation from the Purse Seine category, I agree with Randy's characterization that the only caveat in the amendment was between the two ways to reallocate to the Longline category.

Pivoting to the angling category, trophy fishery, that really is not related to the Purse Seine reallocation alternatives. And it's just pose in on the method of allocating to the trophy fishery within the angling category.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Tom.

MR. WARREN: So it's very conscribed. It's a narrow focus.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: Brad, your camera came on. Did you want to weigh in, too?

MR. McHALE: If I was hearing him right, the Gulf of Mexico has standalone trophy fishery already allocated, 1.8 metric tons, as does the Atlantic, as well as does the north. And so the latter proposal there, Peter, was just whether or not there could be another carveout area, given that limited quota utilization and potential limited opportunities for those recreationally fishing in New England.

So to get to your point, those trophy opportunities are currently in place Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico-wide.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: So then does this mean, with Amendment 13 potentially moving forward in whatever manner it is, then there is no aspect to where the angling community would be getting a bump in their quota?

MR. McHALE: So tying those different threads that Randy and Tom had just explained, to me if the Purse Seine reallocation were finalized and quota was redistributed to the category level -- angling, general --

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Right.

MR. McHALE: -- harpoon, potential longliner -- then the existing angling category distribution within the category would apply. There is really no alteration there. And so there would be potential slight upticks on the school fishery, on the large school fishery, on the giant fishery, but a trickle-down effect would be pretty inconsequential as it related to trophy. And there is ICCAT recommendations on tolerances on school fish.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Okay. Thank you. I might need some -- I might need to talk to one of you following this, but I -- I believe I understand it now, so I appreciate that. I think that's something I might need further clarification on that with one of you guys.

MR. BROOKS: And definitely encourage you to do that, Peter. I think that would be probably helpful.

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Yep. David Schalit? Your line is open, David.

MR. SCHALIT: (Audio interference) a concern, let's call it that.

MR. BROOKS: All right. Hey, David? David?

MR. SCHALIT: Yes.

MR. BROOKS: David, we missed the beginning of what you were saying. Start again.

MR. SCHALIT: Sorry. One of the complaints that I hear from time to time is the -- is this issue of where is this trophy quota coming from? And, of course, if it's coming from the recreational sector, then that should be the end of the discussion.

But I'm mindful that the way this is being handled now is by weight. In other words, the total amount of quota available in this trophy category is coming out of the recreational quota by weight.

And there is another -- there is another way of looking at this, and that is the biological side of it. In other words, I have spoken to some of the scientists about this, and they say that there is a way to establish a relationship biologically between the juvenile and the giant in terms of what is value to the overall biomass.

And I'm wondering if anything has -- if you guys have considered looking at this -- at it from this perspective as an alternative to just doing it by weight. Thanks.

MR. WARREN: The federal impact statement does not consider it from that point of view.

MR. SCHALIT: Okay.

MR. BROOKS: Angel?

MS. WILLEY: Hi. Thanks for the presentation. I just wanted to take another opportunity to indicate that we can't support the alternatives to the angling category trophy fishery because they are not equitable to the vessels fishing from Ocean City, Maryland.

We do support, you know, a boundary change that allows Maryland vessels that fair opportunity.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks, Angel.

I'm not seeing any other hands at this point. Okay. Now I'm seeing two hands. Let's go to Shana and then to Mike Pierdinock. Shana?

MR. CHAIBONGSAI: Shana, maybe -- you should have a request to unmute.

MR. BROOKS: Shana, are you seeing that request or --

MS. MILLER: Can you hear me now?

MR. BROOKS: Now we've got you. Yes.

MS. MILLER: Okay. Thank you. Sorry about that. I'm on my phone now.

Yeah. Just with regard to the proposed change to the trophy category areas, you know, I think it makes sense to divide the northern area and make those changes in the east coast. But just to reiterate what we had said during Amendment 7 that because of ICCAT's targeted -- targeting prohibition in the Gulf of Mexico, there should not be a trophy category at all in the Gulf of Mexico because there shouldn't be any targeting recreationally or commercially there.

And, you know, the fact that there is a dedicated quota for bluefin, you know, it's hard to incidentally catch an 800-pound spawner when you're fishing for other species.

So just to have no incentive for targeting there when these boundaries are reworked, it would be good to eliminate that specific area, and that would also free up some trophy category for the other areas.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Shana.

Mike?

MR. PIERDINOCK: (Audio interference) the proposal for that northern zone. Many of us up here in the north support. You have to look at the history. That zone, as it presently exists, gets closed down very early in the season, and the recreational community then has no opportunity for a trophy size fish.

So to be fair and equitable, among all of the different north and southern zones and Gulf zones, that northern zone that is being proposed would hopefully make it fair and equitable for the recreational anglers in the different zones.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Angel, just to -- I want to just follow up on your comment. Do the -- does the public comment of moving the trophy south line from Great Egg Inlet, New Jersey, to Ocean City, Maryland, address your concern?

MS. WILLEY: Yes.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thank you.

All right. If there are not any other comments -- and, again, I think I'm not seeing any other -- I'm going to suggest we go to public comment, and then we can, after that, open it up to any other comments that people didn't get to weigh in on particularly on our topic number 2.

Randy, does that work?

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Yeah.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. So then let's go to public comment. And just a reminder to any member of the public who wasn't here yesterday, this is an opportunity for you to share your perspectives with the panel and with HMS staff. We manage this as an opportunity for you to -- for you to speak and everyone to listen.

It's not intended to be a back and forth or a Q&A period. We would ask everyone to limit their remarks to three minutes or so. And if you want to get into the conversation, there are a couple of different ways to let us know that.

One would be to click on the little slanty face icon at the bottom of the screen. And when you open that up, you'll see there is a raise hand. If you could just click on that, we'll see that you want to get into the queue. You could also throw the -- throw your aim into the Q&A, if that's -- if that works better for you, so we know that. And then to raise your hand in the -- if you're just on the phone, you would do star three.

So three different ways to let us know. And when I do recognize you, if you could start with your name, affiliation, and whatever the topic is that you're going to be talking to.

So with that, let me see if there are any members of the public who would like to weigh in at this point.

Charlie Bergman, let me go to you. And, again, if you could start with name, affiliation, and topic that you're talking to, please. And you should be able to talk now.

MR. BERGMAN: Okay. I think I'm --

MR. BROOKS: Charlie? We can hear you, Charlie. Can you hear us?

MR. BERGMAN: Yeah, I hear you fine. Charlie Berman, retired National Marine Fisheries Service, retired pelagic longliner, a whole mess of stuff I guess.

I just -- I had some questions, and I have to phrase it into a comment I guess. At some point, I'd like to find out where these overages on the IBQ have been coming from, because if it's -- if the overages are all coming out of the Atlantic, or the majority are coming out of the Atlantic, then I -- then I have a tough time supporting the idea of making the IDQ all the same where the Atlantic fishes the Gulf without Gulf IBQ.

And so that's -- that's my comment.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks.

Any other members of the public who care to comment?

Okay. I am not seeing any other comments. Craig, Pete, are you seeing anybody that I'm not? Okay.

MS. ORTIZ: I haven't seen any comments, so --

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Thanks, Delisse.

So let's see if there is other -- any other comments that AP members wanted to double back on? And I think when we get to 3:30, I want to just doublecheck again for public comment, because it's possible folks -- a person or two might be joining just at that time.

AP members, I know there were maybe a few other comments that folks had. Marty, I see your hand up. Please jump in.

MR. SCANLON: Just a couple of things to follow up on in a previous segment there. As it pertains to NOVESID vessels, that was a question that somebody had asked, what happens with that quota there?

One of the things that Blue Water Fisherman's Association proposes is that instead of holding that quota for a year like is proposed in the proposed rule here, it would be to suspend the NOVESID vessel's quota until the vessel became active again.

And then whatever the activity level of that vessel was prior to becoming inactive, or falling into that status, that would be what would be available to the vessel. That would be one thing that we wanted -- I wanted to add.

The other thing is that -- Scott had touched base on this here -- the IBQ system itself, because we have to have minimum quota to leave the dock, there is always going to be quota leftover in the pelagic Longline category, just because of that fact. Unless everybody goes out there and catches a bluefin on their last trip each year, there is going to be quota leftover. So how do we address that?

And the other thing is is that, you know, one of the things I think either Brad or Tom had mentioned is that, you know, one of the reasons to reallocate the Purse Seine, the 75 percent left in the Purse Seine category at this time, is so that they don't basically have to manage it, you know.

I mean, it's quite a bit of work for them to manage that throughout the year, but to me, you know, with all the questions that have been raised in all of these different categories, and all of the different needs of all of these different categories, you know, I don't know why we were in such a rush to reallocate that permanently at all, the 75 percent that would be leftover.

You know, I mean, you know, each -- each individual category has individual needs each particular year, depending on the circumstances, and, you know, I think NMFS has done, you know, a relatively good job. I don't want to get them to have a big head or nothing there, but they've done a fairly good job of, you know, trying to deal with that, you know.

So, you know, one category may need something this year, and they may -- somebody else may need it the next year. So, you know, I think Alan put a point there, you know, we're trying to fix everything all at once here, and, you know, trying to fix one thing at a time may be the answer here. You know, keep -- remain with the flexibility that NMFS has right now to reallocate that additional 75 percent leftover in the Purse Seine as they have been doing. And it seems to be working fairly well.

You know, there has been some -- you know, it's disturbing to me, as I look at these categories, to see anybody shutdown for any portion of the year. And to make that's more of a situation of mismanagement -- not that I want to blame NMFS for that -- but, you know, it's more of a mismanagement than a quota allocation issue. You know what I mean?

As you can see, you know, as we do this, didn't seem to be getting better, you know? So the times the boats are tied to the dock and not able to fish I think become less and less each year. So, you know, I think that might be -- might be the solution is, you know, not try to fix it all at once, you know, to roll that over, that 75 percent. Let NMFS manage it, you know?

MR. BROOKS: Thanks. Thanks. And I'm glad you're taking care not to be overcomplimentary, Marty.

All right. Let's --

MR. BLANKINSHIP: I don't think there's much worry about us getting a big head. I don't think there is --

(Laughter.)

-- either a bluefin tuna or shark management, so --

MR. SCANLON: Oh, come on, Randy. I haven't been that hard on you; have I?

MR. BROOKS: We're going to let -- we're going to let that one go unanswered, Marty. Let's go to Fly, and then over to Katie. Fly, are you getting a message saying to click on it? Here we are. Fly, you should --

MR. NAVARRO: Good afternoon. Can you hear me now?

MR. BROOKS: We got you.

MR. NAVARRO: Thank you very much. I just sat there, talked to myself for about 30 seconds.

My question is, I'd like a little bit of a clarification -- and I apologize because I didn't -- I'm not sure who exactly brought it up. I think it was Shana that brought up about possibly getting rid of the incidental bluefin quota for the Gulf of Mexico.

Again, these fish that these anglers are coming across are incidental. They are fishing for blue marlin while they are catching the bluefin tuna. And I believe our quota is right around 1.8 or two metric tons, so we're not talking about a lot of fish here.

But I would like some clarification on whether that was being recommended to get rid of that quota or not.

Thank you.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Shana, do you want to jump back in on that? I thought it was around the trophy piece that you were talking about, but do you want to jump in?

MS. MILLER: Yes. I was suggesting that the -- that the dedicated Gulf of Mexico trophy category be eliminated altogether. It is my understanding -- and, Brad or Tom, you can correct me if I'm wrong -- but prior to Amendment 7, any trophies that were, you know, truly incidentally caught in the Gulf of Mexico by an angler were counted against the southern. Is that correct?

MR. McHALE: That is correct. And then, as part of the Amendment 7, we set out the incidental trophy allowance that Fly is referring to, and Amendment 13 does not propose to eliminate that category or that geographic category.

MS. MILLER: Yes. That was -- that was my proposal is an adjustment to what you guys have put as your preferred alternative. So --

MR. NAVARRO: So, Shana, you're recommending that we get rid of that quota altogether.

MS. MILLER: Yes, that's me as one AP member's recommendation. But it's -- I don't know. This is a little -- we're not supposed to be talking to the public commenters I thought, but --

MR. NAVARRO: I am not -- I am not -- just so you know, I am not a public commenter. I am an AP member.

MR. BROOKS: So this is -- this is fine. This is just the AP talking to the AP.

MR. NAVARRO: Yeah. I just wanted -- I just wanted to get some clarification on this recommendation that you just proposed.

MS. MILLER: Yes.

MR. NAVARRO: Okay.

MS. MILLER: So is that clear now?

MR. NAVARRO: It's clear. Not happy with it, but it's clear.

MS. MILLER: Okay. Thanks. I'm happy to --

MR. BROOKS: Go ahead, Shana. Okay. Well, I --

MR. NAVARRO: No, no, no. That's it. That's all. She clarified exactly what I wanted to know.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. Great.

Katie?

MS. WESTFALL: As the discussions continued around the safety valve, and sort of the reserve related to the IBQ, I think Brad alluded to some examples where industry has created sort of a risk pool. And there are examples on the west coast in the groundfish fishery as to how industries sort of work together to create this kind of, you know, pool of quota in case there is some type of disaster set. And I'm happy to connect industry, you know, with some colleagues who worked really closely with fishermen to create that kind of a system.

And I think that has benefits in the sense that you don't have the agency involved and some additional kind of administration and bureaucracy involved, and kind of industry can sort of run that.

And I think separately I want to encourage the agency to think about kind of a set-aside for new entrants or folks that want to reenter the fishery, and I know Blue Water has done some thinking as to how this might be able to work.

But I think it's sort of a best practice in terms of making sure that folks can still enter the fishery and there aren't -- there isn't a huge barrier to participate in the fishery. As we all know and I think was mentioned earlier, there, you know, is an overall conservation benefit of maintaining a viable U.S. fleet and holding on to that North Atlantic swordfish quota.

So I just wanted to make those additional points and happy to talk to folks offline who might be interested in some of those ideas.

MR. BROOKS: Thanks, Katie.

Okay. I don't see any other hands up at this point. Let me just check again to see if there are any members of the public who might have joined in the last five minutes, seven minutes, who have any public comment they wish to make.

Okay. If not, then I think we can probably move to wrapping up here. We can wrap up a little bit early, and, again, give you all a little bit more time in your day. I will hand it off to you, Randy, in one minute.

I would just remind folks that tomorrow we will start at 9:00 a.m. We will be opening up the lines early, as we have done yesterday and today, so please, as you have been doing, keep joining early, so we can just make sure we're connected with everybody.

We'll have two topics for tomorrow. We'll talk about spatial management update initially. And then, after the break, we'll come back and talk about Advisory Panel term limits, and then we'll have public comment and we will wrap up by 11:30. So that's the game plan for tomorrow.

Randy, over to you.

MR. BLANKINSHIP: Thanks Bennett. And thank you all, again, for another good day of discussion, very active engagement, very thoughtful contributions. And really appreciate all of that, especially, you know, the very useful discussion around Amendment 13 that occurred in depth.

And I think that we, as an agency, have benefitted from dedicating this much time certainly to walking through your comments. And, of course, we're still in the comment period. We're looking forward to additional comments as they come in in the next few days. And look forward to continuing our discussion tomorrow for half a day.

And before we go, I do want to share an announcement with you all about an in-season action that we are rolling out. It will file in the Federal Register this afternoon, and you should see an email from our HMS News ListServ coming out later on about it, related to the General category. We are transferring 113.8 metric tons of bluefin quota from the reserve to the General category. That is intended to account for the accrued overharvest of 53.8 tons from previous time periods through this year, and provide further opportunities for the General category.

The September season is progressing, and landings have been high. And, of course, restricted fishing days are in place, and we are using that tool.

But similar to last year, this action will be a very similar thing, which is cover comes overage that has occurred thus far this year and then provide a little bit more quota for additional opportunities. So be on the lookout for the email related to that.

That's it for me. Thank you very much.

MR. BROOKS: Okay. I think we're wrapped up, then, for today. Thanks, everybody. We'll see you bright and early tomorrow morning. Thanks, all, for a really good conversation.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:36 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel

Before: U.S. NOAA

Date: 09-09-21

Place: teleconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Neal R Gross

Court Reporter