PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES
MANAGEMENT BOARD

November 19, 2002
Williamsburg, VA

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Dr. Louis Daniel, NC DMF, Chair
Melvin Shepard, proxy for Rep. Redwine, NC Leg. Appte.
Damon Tatem, NC Gov. Appte.
Dr. John Miglarese, SC DMR
David Cupka, SC Gov. Appte
Susan Shipman, GA Coastal Res.
Kathy Barco, FL Gov. Appte
Robert Mahood, SAFMC
Dr. John Merriner, NMFS
Bill Cole, USFWS

Ad hoc State Representatives

Tom Fote, NJ Gov. Appte
Bruce Freeman, NJ DFG&W
Eric Schwaab, MD DNR
Jack Travelstead, VA MRC
A.C. Carpenter, PRFC

Other Commisoners

Pete Jensen, proxy for MD. Leg. Appte.

Ex-Officio Members

Spud Woodward, GA DNR, Chair Red Drum TC
John Carmichael, NC DMF

ASMFC Staff

Megan Gamble
Bob Beal
Laura Leach
Jeff Brust

Guests

Columbus Brown, US FWS
Dick Brame, CCA
Dale Theiling, SC DNR
Anne Lange, NMFS
Nancy Thompson, NMFS
Susan Mangin, US FWS
J. Clifford Hutt, PRF

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SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

Move to approve minutes of May 22, 2002 meeting.
Motion by Mr. Cupka, second by Mr. Travelstead; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve southern region regulations for implementation of Red Drum Amendment 2.
Motion by Mr. Cupka, second by Ms. Shipman; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the North Carolina proposal for implementation of Red Drum Amendment 2.
Motion by Ms. Shipman, second by Ms. Barco; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the proposals for implementation of Red Drum Amendment 2 from Virginia, PRFC, and Maryland.
Motion by Mr. Cole, second by Mr. Carpenter; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the PRT recommendations for implementation of Red Drum Amendment 2 in Delaware and defer any compliance review until May 1, 2003.
Motion by Ms. Shipman, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

Move acceptance of New Jersey proposal of 1 fish at 18"-27" for the recreational and commercial Red Drum fishery.
Motion by Mr. Cole, second by Mr. Freeman; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve 2002 Red Drum FMP Review.
Motion by Mr. Cupka, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve 2002 Atlantic Croaker FMP Review.
Motion by Mr. Cole, second by Ms. Shipman; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve 2002 Spanish Mackerel FMP Review.
Motion by Mr. Cole, second by Ms. Barco; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve 2002 Spot FMP Review.
Motion by Ms. Shipman, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve 2002 Spotted Seatrout FMP Review.
Motion by Mr. Cupka, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the budget proposed by SEAMAP.
Motion by Mr. Cupka, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the operations plan proposed by SEAMAP.
Motion by Mr. Shepard, second by Mr. Cole; motion carries without objection.

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD

Williamsburg Lodge
Williamsburg, Virginia

November 19, 2002

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The South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Tidewater Room of the Williamsburg Lodge, Williamsburg, Virginia, November 19, 2002, and was called to order at 10:25 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Louis Daniel.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

CHAIRMAN LOUIS DANIEL: I would like to go ahead and call to order the meeting of the South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board, and what I would like to do first off is just go around the table real quick and have everybody introduce themselves.

We're a little short on time, but I think that's important for our board to kind of do that; so if we could start back with Mr. Fote, we'll kind of move around the table here.

MR. TOM FOTE: Tom Fote from the southern state of New Jersey. The Mason-Dixon line runs in New Jersey.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Introduce yourself, Bruce.

MR. BRUCE FREEMAN: I'm Bruce Freeman from the Village Voice.

MR. COLUMBUS BROWN: Columbus Brown, Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta.

MR. BILL COLE: Bill Cole, Fish and Wildlife.

MR. ROBERT MAHOOD: Bob Mahood, South Atlantic Council.

DR. JOHN MERRINER: John Merriner, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Science Center.

MS. KATHY BARCO: Kathy Barco, Florida.

MR. ERIC SCHWAAB: Eric Schwaab, Maryland DNR.

MR. W. PETE JENSEN: Pete Jensen, Maryland Legislative proxy.

MR. JACK TRAVELSTEAD: Jack Travelstead, Virginia.

MR. A.C. CARPENTER: A.C. Carpenter, Potomac River Fisheries.

MR. DAVID CUPKA: David Cupka, South Carolina.

DR. JOHN MIGLARESE: John Miglarese, South Carolina.

MS. SUSAN SHIPMAN: Susan Shipman, Georgia.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Louis Daniel, North Carolina, chair.

MS. MEGAN GAMBLE: Megan Gamble, staffing this meeting one time only.

MR. SPUD WOODWARD: Spud Woodward, Georgia.

MS. LYDIA MUNGER: Lydia Munger, ASMFC staff.

MR. ROBERT E. BEAL: Bob Beal, ASMFC staff.

MS. LAURA LEACH: Laura Leach, ASMFC staff.

MR. MELVIN SHEPARD: Melvin Shepard, legislative proxy, North Carolina.

MR. JOHN CARMICHAEL: John Carmichael, North Carolina Marine Fisheries.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thanks, everybody. We usually have a recorder and so we

have to do voice recognition. We don't today, so we're blessed to have Joe. So thank you, Joe.

I would also like to take just a second to thank Megan for stepping in for Joe Desfosse. There were a lot of staff changes and Megan has done a very nice job getting everything together for us in Joe's absence, and Joe left her with everything in good shape, so we appreciate that from Joe and from Megan.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The first item is let's look at the agenda real quick. If everybody has had a chance to take a look, if there are no changes or modifications to the agenda, we'll just adopt that by consensus. Any objection to that? Okay.

The next is to approve our proceedings from our May meeting. The minutes are attached if everybody has had a chance to look at those. Mr. Cole.

MR. COLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One small correction under the Summary of Motions, Motion 6. I don't think I can motion and second at the same time. We can lay that off to anyone you would choose, one or the other.

MR. FREEMAN: I'm sure you tried it.

MR. COLE: I mean, I probably tried it, but other than that, I have no comments.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So noted. Is that a motion to approve the minutes?

MR. CUPKA: So moved.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: That's moved by David Cupka; second by Jack Travelstead. Any further discussion on the motion? Any objection? Seeing none, the minutes are approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The next item is the public comment. If there is anyone from the public that would like to address the board, now is the time. Seeing no interest, we'll be glad to take comments as we go through our agenda.

RED DRUM PLAN REVIEW REPORT

With that, the first action item, or real action item that we have is to go through the Red Drum Plan Review Team Report on the Amendment 2 implementation plans that were submitted by the various states for red drum. So with that, I will turn it over to Megan, and we'll run through these fairly quickly, I hope.

MS. GAMBLE: Okay, thank you. There are three regulatory requirements under Amendment 2 to the red drum plan. The very first one are all states are required to implement red drum harvest controls, such as bag and size limits, in order to achieve a minimum 40 percent spawning potential ratio.

The second item is a maximum size limit of 27 inches total length or less shall be implemented for all red drum fisheries; and the third, all states must maintain current or more restrictive commercial fishery regulations for red drum under the guidelines of Section 4.2.

The compliance schedule for submitting the state proposals are as follows: July 1 is the submission date for state plans in the southern region, which includes Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, and October 1 was the submission date for state plans in the northern region of North Carolina, Virginia, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey.

January 1, 2003, is the implementation date for all of these state proposals. And then the final date I just wanted to draw your attention to is May 1, 2004, is when the first compliance report will be due from all the states.

Now I will walk you through each of the state proposals. The first three are from the southern region. Florida's state proposal includes one fish at 18 to 27 inches total length. No sale is allowed. That achieves a 40.6 percent SPR.

Georgia's proposal has five fish at 14 to 23 inches total length, which achieves a 42 percent SPR. South Carolina is two fish at 15 to 24 inches total length. No sale is allowed; 44.5 percent SPR.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we want to go ahead and take care of these?

MS. SHIPMAN: Do you want to do them that way?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Let's do them by region. David.

MR. CUPKA: Do you need a motion to approve them?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I believe so unless there is any discussion on them.

MR. CUPKA: So moved then, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion by David Cupka and second by Susan Shipman to approve the southern region regulations for implementation of Amendment 2. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, those plans are approved. We'll go on.

MS. GAMBLE: The next slide is the northern region. North Carolina seems to fall under that. The current regulations in North Carolina is one fish at 18 to 27 inches total length with a commercial cap at 250,000 pounds, with a seven fish limit, and the gillnets must be tended from May 1st to October 31st.
The PRT recommended approval of this proposal after the evaluation of the technical committee, and that was back earlier this year.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Discussion on the North Carolina proposal? Bruce.

MR. FREEMAN: Louis, it's not up there, but Megan indicated the tending of the net. What was the reason for that requirement?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bruce, that was implemented in our red drum fishery management plan, the intent being to -– one of the problems that the Red Drum Technical Committee has discussed for a long time is the unknown bycatch in the small mesh gillnet fishery, the undersized red drum.

And because we can't get a quantity of that, one of the ideas was we could reduce that by requiring attendance. It would take the gear out of the water and also keep the gear soaking for a shorter amount of time. The intent there was to try to reduce the discards in that fishery. Anything further on the North Carolina plan? I need a motion to -–

MS. SHIPMAN: I move approval.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from Susan Shipman; second by Kathy. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none, that motion is approved.

MS. GAMBLE: The next state proposal is from Virginia, and they are in the process of soliciting public comment on two different options. The first option is five fish at 20 to 27 inches total length, which would achieve a 40.8 percent SPR, and the second option is three fish at 18 to 26 inches total length, which achieves a 40.7 percent SPR.

We are hoping to receive an update from the state of Virginia on where they are in the process of approving the state proposal.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Jack.

MR. TRAVELSTEAD: We've been made aware of yet a third option that apparently Maryland and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission have agreed upon.

It's attractive to us and I think that's the way we're going to
end up going so that the entire Chesapeake Bay will be under the same bag and size limits. So if you refer to the Maryland proposal in your package, you'll see what that measure is.

It's a slot limit of 18 to 25 inches with a five-fish possession limit. It comes right off of the tables in the management plan. The commission will adopt that next Tuesday. That's the final public hearing.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Melvin.

MR. SHEPARD: It seems to me it would be appropriate to approve Virginia with the caveat that they choose one of those that have already been sized out at an SPR approved by the technical committee.

I would be willing to make that motion, to move this along, that we approve Virginia's plans with the caveat that they choose an option and inform us which option they're going to be using. It wouldn't be either/or. It would be a specific option. I think that's where you're headed, aren't you, Jack?

MR. TRAVELSTEAD: Yes.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I've got a motion from Melvin; second from A.C. to approve the Virginia plan contingent on them choosing one of those three options, or one that is in the tables for the northern region. Is there any discussion on the motion? Yes, John.

DR. MIGLARESE: Just a question. From what Jack just said, the plans are to choose the Maryland option, right?

MR. TRAVELSTEAD: That's what staff is recommending to the commission, yes. That's what the VMRC staff is recommending to its commission, and they'll be voting on that on Tuesday.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bill Cole.

MR. COLE: Well, Mr. Chairman, if the Bay is going to act in concert with the three entities selecting one option, would it not be prudent here to consider them as we did the southern area of the South Atlantic, and treat them as a region in this motion?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Are you saying to include the PRFC and
Maryland? You can amend the motion to do that if you would like to. That would move it along. That would be a friendly amendment. So, yes, we will take all three, then, Maryland, Potomac River, and Virginia, as one in this motion. Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Could we hear from the other states of what the status is as far as their implementation before we approve that motion?

DR. DANIEL: We certainly can. Do you want to go through those real quick, Megan?

MS. GAMBLE: Absolutely. Joe prepared this presentation for me. so we heard from PRFC after Joe had prepared this for me, and PRFC told the commission that they will be using five fish at 18 to 25 inches for all fishermen. They plan to implement by the January 1, 2003, implementation date.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: A.C.

MR. CARPENTER: Mr. Chairman, I just want to report that when we submitted that, we were looking at a number of options, but the commission has selected and has adopted the five-fish creel, 18 to 25, beginning the first of the year, and I have letters that I can pass out to the board that we're finished.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thanks, A.C. Do you want to go ahead and run through Maryland real quick?

MS. GAMBLE: Maryland is also proposing five fish at 18 to 25 inches total length for all fisheries, which would achieve the 43.0 percent SPR, and they will implement their regulations upon approval by the board and the commission to be effective January 1, 2003.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any questions from Maryland, Virginia, or the Potomac River? The motion is on the floor. Is there any objection to the motion to approve all three implementation plans? Seeing none, that motion is approved. Tom.

MR. FOTE: Since we're at the northern end of this range and I'm looking at these proposals from Maryland, Virginia, and the Potomac River, and New Jersey has basically just put in the one fish, and we would have liked to have availed ourselves except how do we basically do an SPR when we don't have any catch?

So it winds up in a difficult situation, and I'm saying maybe we should be included in the proposal for Maryland, Delaware Bay, and New Jersey.

It should be considered in the northern region, if we're going to make this northern region of Maryland, Delaware, and the Potomac River -– I mean Virginia. We, like New Jersey and Delaware, might want to be included in there too so at least we have some figures to go on. We can't do it by ourselves and we basically are going to penalized because we don't have any fish we're catching.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, one problem that we have, at least presently, is that we haven't had a proposal submitted from New Jersey to kind of include them in anywhere, but the primary issue is that we've got two sets of tables.

We've got the southern bag-size table and the northern bag-size table and you simply fit into that. You're not doing a New Jersey analysis of SPR. You have the same latitude to choose from the various options that the other northern states have had the opportunity to choose from.

MS. GAMBLE: The state of Delaware is also in the process of soliciting public comment, but they are considering five at 20 to 27 inches total length, which achieves a 40.8 percent SPR.

They do intend to implement in early 2003, although they don't believe they can make the January 1, 2003, implementation date. They do plan to in the future request *de minimis* status, although they are not doing that at this time.

And since we're doing this as we go through this slide presentation, I just wanted to let you know what the PRT's recommendation on the Delaware proposal is.

The PRT is suggesting that the board allow a May 1, 2003, deadline as a new implementation date for the state of Delaware. They don't see this as a problem because the harvest is so minimal in the state of Delaware.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any discussion on that point? Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Is Delaware here?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No.

MS. SHIPMAN: Well, I would certainly move approval of the PRT's recommendation and that we defer any compliance decision until May and allow them that time to present a proposal to us. I think the rationale they laid out in their letter is well founded.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from Susan Shipman and second by Bill Cole to defer implementation of the Delaware plan until May 2003. Is there any discussion on the motion? Melvin.

MR. SHEPARD: I think I probably have a question, and the question probably would be are we going to be expecting a *de minimis* status request? Is there going to be any kind of follow up on that. Because I'm like Susan, it's worth following the PRT's recommendation. If they are in that kind of *de minimis* status, are we going to be predicating our approval on receiving a *de minimis* request?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yes, if they're going to request *de minimis*, they're going to have to do that formally. Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: But my motion basically is to defer the implementation until May. I mean, they're going to come back to us with a proposal. I really wasn't thinking about the *de minimis* one way or another. That may be part of their proposal.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other questions or comments on the motion? Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, that motion is approved.

MS. GAMBLE: The next state is New Jersey. We were notified by the state of New Jersey that they are in the process of changing their regulations by notice, but no specific proposal has been submitted to date. We were also informed that the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council is expected to meet in early November, and they do anticipate implementing new measures by January 1, 2003. We're hoping that the state of New Jersey can provide us with an update.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bruce.

MR. FREEMAN: We have selected an alternative of the 18 to 27 inch at one fish. New Jersey has presented to the council the option of one fish, 18 to 27 inches. That's been approved by the council.
We're in the process of having that regulation implemented. It should be in place by January 1st. There must be miscommunication because I think we conveyed this to Joe, but apparently he never got it or it fell through somewhere.

But just for clarification, Louis, so long as the state would use the northern table in our instance, we have the option of making a change if we wanted to go to, let's say, a three-fish bag at 18 to 26 inches or a five-fish bag at 18 to 25? We would have the option of making that change at any time?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You would need to submit that change to the board first --

MR. FREEMAN: Right.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: -- and then make that change, yes. I guess it's akin to conservation equivalency. Well, they are conservation equivalent, but –-

MR. FREEMAN: Well, I know we caught two fish now in the last week, so we may want to make that change.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: But you caught one of them, so -–

MR. FREEMAN: I know.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: -- they're recovering.

MR. FREEMAN: It's a good thing we had 27 because that's what it was.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I think the plan does give you the flexibility to make those changes if you so desire. I just think that the primary issue will be that request needs to be received in writing to the

South Atlantic Board so that we can approve it at our next meeting.

MR. FREEMAN: And as indicated, that same size, one fish, applies to both commercial and recreational.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. David.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to note for the record, someone made the comment that indeed if Bruce Freeman was able to catch one, that those fish must really be coming back.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: They're thick. Tom.

MR. FOTE: And the other fish was caught by John, who is sitting over here on the other side, and he actually caught it in the back bay the day before Election Day, and it was an 18-inch fish. So we've had one at one end of the slot and one at the other end of the slot. The only commissioner in the middle hasn't caught one.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any further discussion on New Jersey?

MR. FREEMAN: No, that's our only remarks.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I've got Bill Cole and then Susan.

MR. COLE: Mr. Chairman, I assume that we move acceptance of the New Jersey proposal. I would so move.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from Bill Cole; second by Bruce Freeman to accept the New Jersey proposal of one fish, 18 to 27, recreational and commercial, for New Jersey. Is there any discussion on that motion? Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: This is my only question, Bruce. Do you anticipate you are going to go back now maybe to your marine council between now and January and go into that table and maybe adjust?

MR. FREEMAN: No. There was a philosophical discussion going on in the last five minutes. Our position originally, Susan, was -- and just for information, Table 4 on the handout is incorrect. We have had an 18 to 27, five-fish bag and then one fish over 27. The table indicates there is no possession limit, it's limitless, but that's incorrect.

The point being that we wanted to have the greatest opportunity to allow a catch to be made. It is a rare event in our state and so we chose, and the council approved, the greatest size distribution, which would be 18 to 27.

In the future, if we start to see increased catches and we get multiple catches, we may want to reduce the size and increase the bag. I think at least for the first year, we'll see how it works.

If there's any comments -– you know, we don't want to get crazy about this and start making changes when we don't have any information. It has, up to date, been a relatively rare event.

We'll see how things go, and I just wanted to get clarification so long as we use the table, we would have that option. We would have to certainly request approval by the board. No problem.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Tom.

MR. FOTE: Part of the philosophical discussion was that I have not seen the table, and we had not communicated that to the public in any of the publications that we had basically put out there.

It was basically just handed to the marine fisheries council a short period before they met, so there really was no public discussion on what we should go to, and so we're just making an assumption here.

That's why we just were leaving it open, because my concern is that maybe the public would want another choice and we just never made that available to them.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, the motion is for the one fish, 18 to 27, for this round; and then if they want to come back and modify that later, they can do that. They have the flexibility to do that.

Is there any other discussion on the motion? Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, that motion is approved.

I think that gets us through the implementation plans. We did receive one letter from George LaPointe from Maine indicating that was something they would get to when they –- well, under emergency if they need to.

That's pretty much what we've received from the states outside of the management unit. With that, it gets us through the implementation plans for Amendment 2. Are there any further discussions or comments on red drum?

ATLANTIC CROAKER STOCK ASSESSMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The next item on the agenda is to go over the Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Subcommittee report with some updates on the status of that committee and some of the actions that are going on.

MS. GAMBLE: Thank you. The Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Subcommittee held a conference call, and the members present were Paul Piavis from Maryland, Rob O'Reiley from Virginia, John Foster from Georgia, Jannica D'Silva from Florida, Eric Williams from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Jeff Brust from Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and John Carmichael was unable to attend.

Paul Piavis was elected chair and the group discussed the stock assessment strategy and they are proposing a two-step approach.
In the short term, the data will be compiled for the stock assessment and reviewed.

Based on that review, the group is going to develop some stock status indicators such as abundance and recruitment indices, as well as some others. Then the next step from there is a more longer term, to do a full-blown stock assessment using stock synthesis or another model.

The problem is there is no one to do the work. There has been a subset of members who volunteered to assist to lead someone in doing the assessment, and those people are Paul Piavis, Jannica D'Silva, and Eric Williams.

The original intent was to task ASMFC staff to conduct the assessment under this group's guidance. Unfortunately, ASMFC is losing that staff member, so we need to identify a new lead assessment person.

So the group came up with some options. The first one is hopefully Jeff will be replaced at the commission, and we could try and task that person, although that's not certain when that would be happening.

Another option is North Carolina and Delaware are hiring new assessment staff, and we could ask for their assistance. The third option is to identify a current state employee to conduct the assessment. Those are the options and we're just looking for some help from the board.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Jack.

MR. TRAVELSTEAD: I was going to ask you, Susan, what is in the planning document for next year relative to this issue or meetings of the board? What kind of money are we talking about there?

MS. SHIPMAN: Help me out here, Bob. I think we knew this was coming up, and I think we sort of sidelined it because we didn't know what we were going to be able to do.

MR. BEAL: We put money in for I think a couple of stock assessment subcommittees and at least one full technical committee, if not two, and then the board –- there's not separate monies set aside for board meetings during meeting week.

There is one meeting of the South Atlantic Board at the South Atlantic Council meeting. So, we have set aside some resources in anticipation of doing the assessment, getting the assessment peer reviewed, and initiating the croaker amendment.

Taking it through the first round of public hearings in '03 is the tentative schedule, but a lot of that depends on how quickly we can get the assessment done and reviewed.

MS. SHIPMAN: But I think we recognized that was a very ambitious schedule, given the situation that we're losing the person who was going to do it. That would be a best-case scenario and I think probably unlikely to get all of that done.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The board did recognize croaker as the next priority for the board after Amendment 2 was completed for red drum, and I think there's indicators in the fishery that suggest that we probably do need to move forward with that as best we can.

But, again, we have this problem with the staff issues. I know that the folks that are on the list up there are very capable people. John, would you like to -–

MR. JOHN CARMICHAEL: I don't see why North Carolina can't take the lead. We have so many people volunteering their help from the other states, it might just take a matter of cracking the whip

and having them all do a little piece of it and work close there with Eric, who has got some ideas for developing a new model at the Beaufort Lab.

So maybe with the new guy that we'll have starting in December and my time a little bit, we can get it put together maybe. So
North Carolina can take the lead on putting together the assessment. Getting plenty of help from folks shouldn't be a big deal.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Jack.

MR. TRAVELSTEAD: I don't want to go so far as to volunteer anyone at this point, but certainly there is a lot of interest about croaker in Virginia. There is an awful lot of croaker data available at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

I know we've spent a lot of money in the past on that species. If John wants to take the lead, I think I can probably convince some others in Virginia to assist in that effort.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I think that would be great. But with Jannica D'Silva, who is a very capable assessment person from Florida, and with Eric Williams and Paul and John willing to take that on -- I mean, John has got a lot of stuff going on, so we will have to have that help from other folks.

He can't take that on solely, but I appreciate him willing to do that. Yes, I was just going to make sure there was nobody else from the board and then go to Dick.

MR. DICK BRAME: I just wanted to reiterate to the board what we said earlier in that this is a priority species for us, CCA states on the east coast, and every chapter I go to in states that I've visited, from Georgia to Maryland, one of their first questions is croaker; what's going on with croaker; when are we going to have a plan because in our view it not only affects croaker, it may potentially affect weakfish.

So we just wanted to reiterate that there is a sizable group of people who are watching and wanting this to happen. Now I understand the constraints, but the public wants to make sure that this stock does not go through its past history of a boom- and-bust sort of fishery.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you, Dick. And I think it's just important to understand that these staff changes are difficult on us, and I think the public needs to recognize that I think we're moving forward as quickly as we can.

I think we're moving forward now quicker than we anticipated and I'm glad to hear that we've got the resources dedicated in 2003 to get those groups together and have an opportunity to begin working on that important assessment. I've got Tom and then Susan.

MR. FOTE: We went out to public hearing on weakfish down in the Delaware Bay in covering that area. There was a lot of talk about why Delaware Bay is not seeing weakfish as compared to the rises in others like Sandy Hook Bay and Barnegat Bay and a few of the others that are further north.

And some of the discussion was that we have huge amounts of croaker now in Delaware Bay, which we didn't have before, and are there any studies or any information that would basically support that concept or idea as croakers move in, since they compete for the same food as weakfish, that the weakfish kind of move out of an area. We don't have that much information in New Jersey, but do you have it in other states?

DR. DANIEL: I'm not aware of that. It doesn't appear to be the case, at least in Chesapeake Bay, from what I've seen and heard. They've got them both in there, but I don't know. Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Just to Dick's point -- and, Dick, you've been sitting in with us for about three years now I think, and it's not that I think this board has kind of put croaker to the side. We did have the stock assessment done by N.C. State. That was reviewed.

It didn't really get us where we wanted to go. So we have been working on it, and now I think we're ready to go and do a stock assessment, a more full blown, looking at some of the other indices and more data than was used in the other.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bruce.

MR. FREEMAN: Louis, we're not going to volunteer any people because we don't have any, but in our survey, our ocean survey, we are picking up croaker much more frequently than we have, and it's a continuing process where each year it seems to be more and more.

When the stock assessment people get together, it may be useful to call on our data. Don't necessarily

stop at Maryland, for example, because -– and they may even be getting it up in Massachusetts, I don't know.

But it has become a very frequent catch in our trawl survey over
much of the year and we are seeing it also in our bays, particularly the juveniles. We may be able to provide information where a few years ago we didn't have anything and now we do.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The man that needs to hear that is here. Is there any other discussion on croaker and where we are? Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Just one quick question. Is there the same debate going on in croaker and aging that we've had in these other species?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: There doesn't appear to be, Susan. The work that was funded by VMRC out of VIMS was a PhD dissertation by Luiz Barbieri on croaker and he did a really good treatise on appropriate aging techniques. It's published in Fishery Bulletin. I don't think there is the debate or question that we've had for the others.

MS. SHIPMAN: But the aging data that the states have, do they follow basically Luiz's techniques?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: As far as I know, yes. What Cynthia is doing at ODU, what North Carolina is doing, which are the principal agers right now that I'm aware of for croaker, we're all using the same technique, sectioned otoliths, and that's the method.

MS. SHIPMAN: What about the historical data? I just don't want us to get in this same debate we were in in weakfish for years and that we've been in in a number of other species.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I don't believe we're going to have that because we don't have the varied data sources that we had with weakfish. I think the data sources are limited and I know we go back to the mid 80's with otolith data.

So, I mean, we should have plenty of otolith only data to where we don't have to get into that scale and otolith comparison work and then try and -- like Doug and I did with weakfish, try to come up with a way to convert scale ages to otolith ages.

I don't think we're going to have that problem with croaker. I hope we don't. I don't anticipate those problems. Anything else on croaker? A.C.

MR. CARPENTER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would like the opportunity to give some editorial comments to the staff with regard to PRFC's cull panel requirements that's in the review of the 2002 review before it becomes finalized. There is some inaccurate statements in there that I need to correct.

MS. GAMBLE: Can I ask him a question? A.C., is that something you can just give to staff or is that something you need to discuss?

MR. CARPENTER: No, I can just give you these editorial things.

MS. GAMBLE: Great, thank you. Do you want me to go ahead?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Please.

2002 FMP REVIEWS

MS. GAMBLE: The next item on the agenda is to go through the 2002 FMP reviews for red drum, Atlantic croaker, Spanish mackerel, spot and spotted seatrout.

RED DRUM FMP REVIEW

The first FMP review is for red drum. Joe and the PRT has made some major text revisions based on the adoption of Amendment 2 to Section 1 in the FMP review.

The status of the fishery has been updated to include the 2001 fishing season, and the commercial and recreational landings have been updated to include the 2001 fishing year.

Amendment 2 compliance criteria and dates have been added to Section 6, and the state regulations have been updated. That's the state regulations that were current as of October 1, 2002.
That can be found in Table 4 in the FMP review.

And then the research needs have also been updated based on what was included in Amendment 2. I'm not sure if you want to -– I don't know how you guys usually proceed, if you approve them all in one fell swoop.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's sort of at the pleasure of the board. We can approve them one at a

time or altogether. Let's go ahead and do them one at a time. Any discussions on red drum plan review?

I've got a motion from David Cupka and second by Bill Cole to approve the 2002 review of the Red Drum Fishery Management Plan. Is there any discussion on that motion? Is there any objection? Seeing none, that one is approved.

ATLANTIC CROAKER FMP REVIEW

MS. GAMBLE: The next FMP review is the Atlantic Croaker FMP. There have been some minor edits to the text to reflect some updated information from the state of North Carolina, and that can be found in Sections 2, 3, and 5.

The status of the fishery has also been updated in this FMP review with 2001 data and including the landings tables in the FMP review. The PRT is recommending an update to the stock assessment, and that can be found in Section 4.

The state regulations are also updated current as of October 1, 2002. And then the PRT is also looking for the board to recommend what type of peer review process you would like to use, and there are four that are available.

The first is the commission can organize a stock assessment peer review panel. Two is to use an existing organization such as AFS. Three is to use the SAW/SARC process in the northeast. And then four is a new process, which is SEDAR, in the southeast.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Discussion on croaker? Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Bob, help me out here. I was thinking under the new stock assessment committee that they would review and make recommendations to us on what might be the best peer review route.

MR. BEAL: Yes, that's one of their tasks. If the board today wants to supercede that, they can do that. The plan now is to have that new stock assessment committee, the umbrella stock assessment committee meet in I think March of next year, or maybe even February, and then they can start their deliberations of that at that point.

I don't think the croaker assessment is going to be done by February of next year, unless John really moves on it. So, you know, I think that group probably has time to work on it.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Don't sell him short. David.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I called Joe and gave him some comments on this before he departed. One of the things that I wanted to check was the status of the information under Section 2, which is status of the stock dealing with the SEAMAP information, because I know we've got information more recent than 1997, and I didn't know if steps were being taken to update that information or not.

MS. GAMBLE: Not that I'm aware of.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We need to do that, though, I agree with you.

MS. GAMBLE: Usually when we do these FMP reviews, we use whatever information is most current out of the technical committee. I am not clear on whether or not the technical committee has reviewed the information which you're referring to.

MR. CUPKA: Well, part of the problem may be that, of course, SEAMAP is a program run by South Carolina, but we don't really have anybody on the plan review team. Maybe that's why it hasn't gotten in there.

But somebody that's on the plan review team needs to contact our SEAMAP people or we'll have them get in touch with whoever the appropriate person would be, because certainly that information is available and it's probably just slipped between the cracks. We should have it through 2001, I'm pretty sure.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We'll get that from Betty, contact Betty?

MR. CUPKA: Yes.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other comments on the Croaker FMP review? I have a motion to accept from Bill Cole; second from Susan Shipman. Is there any discussion on that motion?

MR. COLE: Mr. Chairman, Ms. Shipman made a point. Susan, as a follow up, then what we would do in response to the request to us is to wait and let the commission stock assessment group,

advise us on which one of the four preferred would be the preferred peer reviews?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any further discussion on the motion? Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, that motion is approved. Let's move on to Spanish mackerel when you're ready.

SPANISH MACKEREL FMP REVIEW

MS. GAMBLE: There have not been any major changes to the Spanish Mackerel FMP review since last time around. The landings data and the status of the fishery have been updated to reflect the 2001 fishing season, and there has not been any changes to the state regulations in this fishery.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Discussions on Spanish mackerel plan review? Bill Cole.

MR. COLE: Move acceptance of the plan review for 2002 Spanish mackerel.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from Bill Cole; second from Kathy Barco. Is there any discussion on that motion? Any objection? Seeing none, the motion is approved. Spot.

SPOT FMP REVIEW

MS. GAMBLE: There have been some minor editorial changes to reflect some new information from the state of North Carolina. The landings and the status of the fishery have also been updated in this FMP to reflect some 2001 fishing season information. There also has not been any changes to state regulations for spot.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Discussion on spot plan review?

MS. SHIPMAN: I move approval.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion to approve from Susan Shipman; second from Bill Cole. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none, that motion is approved. Speckled trout.

SPOTTED SEATROUT FMP REVIEW

MR. GAMBLE: The final FMP review is spotted seatrout. There has been some minor changes to the status of the stocks and the assessment advice to reflect some new information from a Florida assessment, and those changes can be found in Sections 2 and 4.

The status of the fishery has been updated to include 2001 data. Research and monitoring has been updated to include new information from North Carolina and Florida, and that's in Section 5. And then, finally, the state regulations have been updated as of October 1, 2002.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Discussions on spotted seatrout?

MR. CUPKA: Move approval.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from David Cupka; second from Bill Cole to approve the 2002 spotted trout review. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none, that is approved.

MS. GAMBLE: The PRT is done.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. We need to go ahead. I received several of the –- I was retained on several of the PRT's and needed to go ahead and get off of that; and so as the chair, I went ahead and asked Joe Desfosse to replace me with Lee Paramore on red drum and Tina Moore on Atlantic croaker to facilitate this review, and we need to go ahead and make that change permanent, if there is no objection.

MR. COLE: Without objection.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Without objection, okay. Megan, do you want to go over that other one?

MS. GAMBLE: The last item that was discussed by the plan review team is that there was one individual who has not been participating lately, and that is the representative from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

The PRT just wanted some input as to whether or not this individual should continue to receive information from the PRT or does that individual need to be replaced? We're just looking for some guidance.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: I don't think he is going to participate on the PRT, but we certainly would still like to receive the information.

MS. GAMBLE: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Bob, what is the status of our withdrawal? I know you have frequent conversations with Monica, and maybe you can update us on where the council is on withdrawing our plan.

MR. MAHOOD: We're still withdrawing. No, we hope to have the package ready for the chairman's signature maybe as soon as next week.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay, is there anything else on the plan reviews? Okay, we got through that one. The next is Geoff's SEAMAP update. We've got several things we need to do here.

SEAMAP UPDATE

MR. GEOFFREY G. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You guys are making incredible progress here today, and I hate to slow you down with a document that was just handed out this morning.

We'll try and walk you through these things and get some updates to you and hopefully make some action items to keep SEAMAP rolling. First of all, does everybody have a packet?

There's a little bit of an agenda up at the top, just to give you an idea of what we'll be going over. You can see the meeting schedules and I don't think we need to read that off, but we've been busy again.

We'll move down to the budget and operations plans; just a little bit of a background on that and then there is an action item following.

Basically there was a lot of discussion at the committee level trying to figure out how to maintain the trawl survey in its entirety, as well as provide some progress on both the crustacean work group and the bottom mapping project.

So, the budget that you see on the second page was really a balance to try and make some progress on a couple of different fronts. If you look at the second page, the budget that went to the commission was pared down a bit again.

It was $56,000 for half salary for the SEAMAP coordinator and then the annual meeting of bottom mapping work group, data management work group, and partially funding for the crustacean symposium. There's an item a little later with that, but that's the shrimp and blue crab symposium to give some information back to the South Atlantic Board.

The item for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, $20,000 is for bottom mapping. We found that they were doing some other work and it was easier to spend the money through them instead of through the commission to do some contracts and move forward.

Part of that is matching money for an additional grant that we put forth, or proposal that was put into ESDIM under a data recovery project. And then the main item for funding was the $298,000 for the trawl survey, and that does include the age growth biologist position, which has been done for the last two years and will continue to occur in 2003.

Those are the majors in terms of the budget. Our typical level funding is the $375,387. The committee really couldn't make the hard choices of where to come up with a $10,000 cut, and so NMFS was kind enough to give us a one year kind of loan on that.

But next year, we're going to have to figure out how to pare this down a little bit more. The $20,000 for the bottom mapping was kind of seed money, or not an official match, but some sort of an effort from SEAMAP to match a proposal that went in; and if that gets funded, then that would be a three-year recurring thing.

So anyway, we're at $375,387 for 2003. That is the quick summary and the budget recommendation from the South Atlantic Committee.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: I think it was probably clear. The $20,000 is not going to be spent by the South Atlantic Council. It will be passed through to the appropriate group that the SEAMAP bottom group determines should have the money.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, we've got a budget to approve. David.

MR. CUPKA: I would move that we approve the budget recommended by the South Atlantic SEAMAP Committee.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from David Cupka and second from Bill Cole. Is there discussion on the budget? Seeing none, is there any objection? If not, that is approved. Geoff.

MR. WHITE: Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman. The next item is the 2003 South Atlantic Operations Plan. That starts on page 8 and continues through page 14. There are no major changes to this. We've got each agencies activities.

Under North Carolina, they have the Pamlico Sound survey and then committees and work group meetings. South Carolina runs the shallow water trawl survey and workgroup meetings.

Georgia attends meetings as scheduled, as does Florida and the
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and NMFS continues to work on their data management system. The cooperative winter trawling is written under NMFS, and it should be written under U.S. Fish and Wildlife, so I will make that change.

And the Atlantic States obviously provides coordination and administrative support. Most of the rest of the information in the document is the standard language, and I will call a little bit of attention to page 14 under the work groups.

I did add in a description of what each work group will be doing in 2003, just so it's a little bit clearer for our operations planning in terms of the bottom mapping crustacean work group.

The shallow trawl is not going to be meeting next year, but the data management will be. I know that this got to you a little bit late. If you are comfortable with it and would like to approve it today, I think that's wonderful. If not, I certainly wouldn't mind if you took it home, reviewed it, and we finished it with e-mail. That's up to the chair.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Does anyone feel comfortable making a motion at this time to approve the operations plan or can we do that with a few questions, perhaps. John.

MR. MIGLARESE: Can I just ask a question?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yes, sir.

MR. MIGLARESE: Geoff, on page 3 of the revised SEAMAP goals and objectives, could you tell me a little bit more about the discussion about expanding the purview of the SEAMAP for that coordination and dissemination of data?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: That's the next action item.

MR. MIGLARESE: Oh, it is?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yes, sir. Melvin.

MR. SHEPARD: Is the discussion on approving this budget?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No, the discussion is on approving the operations plan. We've approved the budget and they have outlined -– where does it start, Geoff, on page 7?

MR. WHITE: The operations plan begins on page 8.
CHAIRMAN DANIEL: On page 8.

MR. SHEPARD: I have no problem approving this operation plan. I don't see any reason to question it. I move for approval.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Motion from Melvin Shepard and second by Bill Cole to approve the operations plan. Are there any further discussions or questions on that motion? Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, that is approved.

That was an attachment to this packet, so next we'll move to the next action item, which is on the next page, which is a discussion on a revision to the goals and objectives.

MR. WHITE: Correct. And the NEAMAP coordination, I just did just want to point out that between SEAMAP and as NEAMAP develops, NEAMAP had asked for some cross-committee membership and liaison and the SEAMAP South Atlantic Committee talked about it.

And basically Katie West and Lisa Kline already serve on both committees, and so they're acting as kind of a liaison to make sure that those two programs are coordinated and compatible.

On to page 3 the revision of the SEAMAP goals and objectives, actually, it was in February that I brought up the fact that there was going to be a meeting with the joint chairs and coordinators to talk about expanding the scope of SEAMAP relative to fisheries-independent data that was not collected by SEAMAP.

Right now the goals and objectives are specifically to collect and to manage and disseminate the data that SEAMAP collects, and there's some provisions in there that say that no analysis should occur.

The first step that the joint chairs had in their meeting back in May -– yes, it was May 7 -– was to look at SEAMAP and say should there be a place where people can go and get maybe not the one-stop shopping of ACCSP, but at least a coordinated data access point for fisheries-independent data.

ACCSP had decided that's not really under their purview because it's fisheries independent, and they're going to work on the fisheries dependant information. In order to move forward towards that end, the first thing that the group decided they

needed to do was to revise the goals and objectives for SEAMAP.

This doesn't change the activities, per se, for next year, but what it does do is it allows the change in the highlighted things, overall provide the ability to basically publish the trend information, the summary statistics information on the SEAMAP data that is collected that hadn't been a regular part of SEAMAP activities in the past.

But it's a data product that doesn't really go to analysis, and the committee thought it would be a good benefit. The other thing it does is expand the scope of the goals for the data management system so that there would be some coordination and maybe some early working on standards and data elements types of things that all fisheries-independent surveys collect and making sure that there is some coordination and standard level for that.

I think the end goal is this would provide a stronger data product and a better view of SEAMAP if there was going to be an umbrella program for fisheries information. NEAMAP was kind of set up that way, and the committee felt that SEAMAP should fill that role instead of having something or someone else step up to that role.

So, the first step, again, was to revise these goals and objectives. What I have done is provide you with the new goals and objectives. They're on page 15 through 17. There, for your reference, are the old goals and objectives.

I shouldn't say old; I should say the current goals and objectives. Although they've kind of been reorganized from five down to three, primarily the same bullets have transferred up to the new ones.

The places on page 17 where you see some highlighted items, those have actually been removed from the goals and objectives because they were considered smaller items that should be under the operations plan level.

I apologize for jumping around, but if you look at page 3 and 4, the highlighted items there are basically the newer bullets and slightly expanded scope. It provides the opportunity to become the umbrella program as a first step, but it doesn't actually go any further than that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: John, did you want to go ahead and -–

MR. MIGLARESE: I just am still not clear as to why SEAMAP would want to become the umbrella program?

MR. WHITE: A lot of the discussion was that SEAMAP hasn't had a funding increase in a while to collect the data that they need; and instead of being a player in providing SEAMAP data to somebody else to serve out as an umbrella program, they thought that SEAMAP could fit that role.

I would actually ask John Merriner to jump in and help me out if he remembers anything additional from the meeting.

DR. MERRINER: Comments relative to the meeting; the concern I think relative to SEAMAP were that there were three components within it, and there was a long-standing database and collections of fisheries-independent information.

They have grown. SEAMAP has had parallels grow; i.e. in FIN in the Gulf of the Mexico and in the ACCSP, that were looking to be coastwide databases as well. They had components within both of those programs that were to address fishery-independent data sources.

As I understood it or as I think SEAMAP began to understand it, it was a matter that SEAMAP is already an Extant, one, and Extant program pulling together three geographic areas; and until and if other programs are actually able to activate those components, then that's one thing.

But at this point in time they were not able to or moving to directly activate the fishery-independent portions of it, so the thought was to use a SEAMAP

as an umbrella entity and to access information through SEAMAP rather than through individual offices, if I'm not mistaken.

That part was part of the issue of what is the umbrella, whether you go into -– and that was tied mainly to a website designation and the portal for accessing data, that there would be a SEAMAP website for accessing information rather than being either a Caribbean portal, a Gulf of Mexico Gulf Commission portal, and ASMFC portal; that there would be a SEAMAP site and then branch to the ones that you wanted to go.

I thought that was, as much as anything else, where a lot of the discussion of the umbrella went. And it's still true that the other programs that are developing fishery independent modules;

none of them are at this point extant operational. SEAMAP is.

So that's two prongs of how that umbrella discussion came into play. Whether it's superceded later as ACCSP takes off in the Atlantic and does fishery-independent incorporation, that's one point. Number two, the Gulf may well, through FIN, adopt the same kind of fishery-independent program.

But it was to have SEAMAP recognition as being the portal window by which individuals access fishery-independent data collected by the SEAMAP program, Gulf, Caribbean, and Atlantic.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you, John. David.

MR. CUPKA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I could give a little historical perspective to this, since I think I was the first chairman of the SEAMAP South Atlantic Program when we started it.

I can tell you over the years that SEAMAP has been a good program, but it has never been one that's been funded at an adequate level. In fact, when we first started the program, we were carrying out more activities than we're carrying out now in the South Atlantic, with the exception of some bottom mapping work, which is extremely important not only for the states, but for the council's work.

The whole heart of that program has been the trawl survey. It's been the major portion, and in fact, over the years, I don't even think we've been able to maintain it at the level we once had.

I think we had to cut out some stations because, again, over time with level funding, we just couldn't do as much as we could before.

I guess I have some concerns. Although I think this is a very laudable goal, I'm not sure how we're going to accomplish this with the resources that SEAMAP currently has. If it's just to provide one access point for all SEAMAP data, that probably would not be a problem.

But if they envision getting involved in other fisheries- independent data that is collected outside of SEAMAP, I just don't see how that is going to happen without a significant infusion of resources into the program.

I guess that would by my concern on this. And if we know that we're not going to be able to do that, I hate to see us say this program is going to do something, knowing ahead of time it's going to be extremely difficult to do that.

I think if the resources are available, then that would be one opportunity the SEAMAP could provide. I don't see the resources there, like I say, to even carry on the existing activities, much less take on what to me seems to be an extremely large commitment.

Although I think it would be useful and at some point hopefully some institution would be able to serve that function, but I don't know, I just have some concerns about it at this point as I understand it.

Like I say, if it's just to combine the existing SEAMAP data and make it available through the three components, the Gulf, the South Atlantic, and the Caribbean, that could probably be handled through the database administrator within NMFS.

But if we're going to try and incorporate other data, that's a tremendous undertaking, and I would just hate to see us go down that road without some idea that we're going to actually be able to do that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And I think those are valid concerns, David, and especially if we can't get the -– you know, we're always having problems with the geographic scope of our trawl surveys. It seems like, the things that I've heard, the reports I've gotten back and forth on the age and growth biologist, which I feel is a critical position in that SEAMAP program, you know, there's some times that they don't get full funding for that position and there's sometimes there's money.

Right now we've got it fully funded for 2003, but I think your concerns are well founded. I've got Bill Cole and then John Miglarese and then Bob Mahood.

MR. COLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I share David's concerns here, but let me go a little bit further. What we are trying to do, I think, and what Congress has told us to do, is to create what is called coastal fishery information systems.

To me, SEAMAP is a component of a fishery information system. Now, I recognize, because I've had a lot of experience with ACCSP, that we are not there. However, we still dream a lot and I do think we will ultimately get there.

Goal 3, I think, to operate the SEAMAP data management system for efficient management and timely dissemination of fishery- independent data and information -- and I would add to that, Geoff, consistent with the fishery information systems in the Gulf and the South Atlantic and the Caribbean.

I mean, if you want to attract congressional attention right now, show your links to what is already working. I do want to, on Goal 4, recognize the need for it, but I do share David's immediate financial concerns.

Let me say this. I think from the ACCSP standpoint, we do need SEAMAP to look at what it's got, clean it up for us, and provide us the links that will be in our modules, and I'm sure in the Gulf modules, the correct links that we need to access it.

I don't think that right now ACCSP proposes to manage these datasets, except to provide the links to those that you have listed and are managing. Now how far you go with, as David said, looking for the other datasets is, I think, a budget question.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: John.

MR. MIGLARESE: David does provide us a really good history and context, and it reminds me of one other point, and that is the point when SEAMAP was first formed and MARMAP and some of the other programs that the state of South Carolina has been involved with, we all provided our data to a clearinghouse, which ultimately was the -– and I don't know what the successor organization name is, but the NODC.

So, Geoff, John, the question I have is isn't there already a clearinghouse? Isn't there already a federal clearinghouse with much of this data?

MR. WHITE: The data that SEAMAP collects is sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service, who has kind of a central SEAMAP database. It's not overly accessible, and they've been making some revisions to the format, which we hope to actually make functional here soon.

They've been working on that for about four years now. It was a great system when it was developed back in 1985, but it needs to be updated to capture and hold some of the detailed data that South Carolina collects, but there is no place to store it in the central system right now, so we're trying to work with the data management work groups to get that available.

So in terms of is there a central clearinghouse, there is a place for SEAMAP collected data to go to, but there is no place that would even provide the links for that portal for fisheries- independent data that would come from several sources.

So if you were going to go do a stock assessment, you would still have to call -- if there were five states involved, you would have to call all five states to get the abundance indices and things like that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: I think another consideration is, at least from the council's perspective, things have changed here recently. Because there's some court decisions across the country, the council now not only must specify what type of data they need collected for management, but we have to specify the methodology of the programs for that data collection.

And once a fisheries management plan or amendment is approved, it's incumbent upon the Secretary of Commerce to activate or implement that program.

The South Atlantic Council is going exclusively to ACCSP with this; and so when you talk about SEAMAP as an umbrella, you know, I think we have used SEAMAP as a component. I think Bill said earlier that SEAMAP is one of the fisheries-independent components that would come under ACCSP.

It's going to be an interesting situation over the short term here to see how this works, because at some

point I think NMFS is going to have to start incorporating the components that are out there with ACCSP; fisheries-independent data, certainly bycatch information that's available. So I'm not sure, Geoff, when we talk about SEAMAP as an umbrella for everything, exactly how that plays into the ACCSP.

MR. WHITE: It would be for fisheries independent. Right now, and the meetings of the last few months with ACCSP, they actually made the motion that the fisheries independent was not on their schedule in the next many years, because they were going to be working on, first of all, getting the catch/effort modules completed as well as then getting the biological and the bycatch and the discard prioritization and the social/economic efforts going.

So they've basically said that they don't foresee handling fisheries-independent data for quite some time, and so the goal or the idea of changing the goals and objectives was to allow that capability to occur within SEAMAP.

And relative to David's concern on funding, I think the committee looked at it as if it's not written as part of the goals and objectives, then nobody can go ask for money about it because it's not part of what we said we were going to do.

I don't know which one needs to come first, the funds or the documentation to say that this is something that we would like to be able to do and it's under our management plan or charter as a program. Did that answer your question?

MR. MAHOOD: Yes, and I understand, but I still think what you're saying is that NMFS is accepting that SEAMAP would be the vehicle for collecting the fisheries-independent information. Is that what you telling me?

When you kept saying "they," you were talking about NMFS was not going to get around specifically to implementing collection of fisheries-independent information?

MR. WHITE: ACCSP.

MR. MAHOOD: Okay, ACCSP. But, still, I mean SEAMAP would be the vehicle for that information to be collected?

MR. WHITE: Correct.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Susan.

MS. SHIPMAN: Well, Geoff recapped basically what my recollection was as far as ACCSP. My concern would be if we were to go after funding for an umbrella program, in a sense we're competing with the funding initiatives we've really had on the table for quite some time and are continuing to go forward, hopefully, to continue to build the support for ACCSP.

You know, it seems like the partners, the 23 partners had made a decision that, yes, we were going to try to build the program for the fishery-dependent stuff, which isn't to take anything away from the fishery independent.

But I'm very concerned about us getting in and competing for very limited resources, particularly given what the political climate is right now. I think it's laudable to maybe build these goals and build the structure of the program, but as far as actively going out and trying to find a very comprehensive fishery-independent program, I'm concerned about the competition with ACCSP and how that will be viewed by the partners who are not sitting at this table.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you, Susan. I don't see that there's a whole lot of enthusiasm going forward with this as a recommendation at this time, and that perhaps when those goals and objectives for the dependent sampling program in ACCSP have been met, then this may be an outlet for moving forward with expanding that into the independent realm.

Any further comments or discussion on this section on modifying the goals and objectives of SEAMAP? John.

MR. MIGLARESE: I guess the thing that we need to put on the record is that this may be, as David used the word, laudable, but it may be duplicative, and it doesn't seem to me that we've gotten enough information that I am convinced.

I mean, all my entire history has been giving the NODC data from BLM or from MARMAP or from SEAMAP, so there has got to be that federal entity already out there, and I wish I could just recollect the long acronym for that data name. That's some work that we probably ought to talk to our federal partners and find out what is that data clearinghouse.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I agree, and I certainly don't believe this is not important. I mean, what we're learning through the SAW/SARC and the

new SEDAR process with the South Atlantic from some of the new models that we're using, the stock synthesis forward- projecting models, that these independent indices are critical to our ability to access many of these stocks, particularly if we don't have really good time series on age data and those types of things that we've historically used in fisheries management.

So by not having good reflective, independent indices of abundance from any of these species, the management process suffers and the assessment process suffers. I don't disagree that there needs to be a process where we need to be able to put that information together.

We need to find out what we've got. We need to figure out the utility of some of these programs and whether or not they need to be either completely scrapped or whether they need to be modified to provide the information that the assessment folks need in order to use the data rather than just to simply say we have a time series but we can't use it for anything. Bill.

MR. COLE: Louis, I feel like we're leaving something hanging. I would be inclined to suggest –- Geoff, have you talked to the IT people in Gulf FIN and ACCSP as to how we best create a link to these datasets?

I understand the executive director's comment to us all that we were not interested in doing independent analysis or data collection or storage at this time, but that question still needs to be asked, both in the Gulf and on the Atlantic, of how you would go about doing it.

I'm not capable, sitting here, of answering that IT question. That's the reason we pay these IT people a fair amount of money.
I'm willing to bet that John's guess that there is existing already a clearinghouse, I'm willing to bet he's right, or someone has started out as a clearinghouse.

What I'm also willing to bet is that it's gone through several personnel changes, it's gone through a lot of other changes, and it probably is in a digital format that is in a totally different language than any of the communicators used today.

These are the kinds of questions that I have and I have to have answers to it before I'm very comfortable of, as Susan says, creating a competitive information system, whether it's dependent or independent. I think if you answer that question, you can answer it for the Gulf also.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We've got ten minutes because they've got to set up a legislative luncheon. What I see is there's a lot of information that needs to be gathered before we can move forward on this, and maybe we would like to bring this back to the board at our next meeting.
We've really got two other action items that we need to go over. We've got a bottom mapping update and a crustacean work update, but there's some action attached to that, and then there is a real quick, just a real quick change in station allocation in the trawl survey.

They're making some recommendations, but mostly they're recommending that they do some changing in the species that they're sampling, that they begin to add another species to the aging samples that are being taken on the trawl survey work group.

They were doing croaker, weakfish, and spot, and there has been a recommendation to begin doing southern kingfish, an important recreational and commercial fishery for the South Atlantic.

So we need to take care of those two real quick so that we can get out of here and let these guys set up. So, Geoff, if you could, real quickly, move us through the blue crab actions that we need to take, and then we'll move to the next one and be done.

MR. WHITE: Actually, in the minutes of the last meeting, you did approve, with a motion basically, the idea of looking at the blue crab biological summary through the Crustacean Society meeting in June.

What we've realized since then is that they probably won't be able to summarize the stock assessments and stock status, and so the commission may need to do some additional legwork to do that and we wanted to get approval of that idea.

But, thirdly, we wanted to ask the board, in preparation for your questions relative to the management issues on blue crab, do you want the crustacean work group to be summarizing just the current kind of species profile biology assessment, what state assessments are occurring, and the stock status and stop there, or would you like us to actually –- would you like to provide us with some either management questions or policy issues that you wanted us to provide you some background on. We

don't know at what point to stop at, and we wanted some direction from the board on that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Eric.

MR. SCHWAAB: I guess, since I was the one that originally brought this up, my thought in doing so was approaching the issue from two different perspectives. One was the stock perspective. The other was at least providing an opportunity for us to compare notes from a management perspective.

Many of us are facing similar issues up and down the coast with respect to management concerns, and I think it would be helpful to at least have some collection of various management approaches in one place for the purposes of education and improved learning from the experience of each other. That's the perspective that I bring to it.

MR. WHITE: I think we can do that summary for you in terms of what the existing management plans are and what people are doing currently; and then wherever you guys want to take that would be fine.

MR. SCHWAAB: No problem.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is that direction enough for you?

MR. WHITE: That's what I need.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The only other thing -- and I think we can do this by consensus. I mean, there's a pretty clear need for collection of kingfish samples, primarily the southern kingfish.

They have suggested that they discontinue sampling spot, a very short-lived sciaenid, for a more long-lived one that we have very little information on.

If there is no objection to concurring with their request to make that change, I don't believe we need to do anything additional unless anybody has any questions or comments about that.

OTHER BUISNESS

That takes us down to Other Business. Is there any other business to come before the South Atlantic Board? Bill.

MR. COLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The winter tagging cruise will be in January, hopefully, somewhere between the 12th and the 24th. We're going to be working basically off of Hatteras and up to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

If there are any states or investigators that need samples or anything else, if they will send me a protocol, I will try to work it out and get the work done during that timeframe.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you, Bill.

MR. COLE: And I'm also looking for experienced help and hands.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Taggers. Well, let me thank Geoff for his work with SEAMAP, thank Megan for stepping in at the last minute.

This is my last meeting as the chair of the board. Bill Cole will take over at the next meeting. I'm proud of the Amendment 2 to red drum, what we've accomplished, and I appreciate you all giving me the opportunity to do this. So with that, we are adjourned in perfect time.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 o'clock noon, November 19, 2002.)

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