# PROCEEDINGS OF THE

# ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

# COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD

**The Westin Crystal City**
**Arlington, Virginia**
**Hybrid Meeting**

**February 4, 2026**

**Approved August 5, 2026**

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

**INDEX OF MOTIONS**

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).

2. **Approval of Proceedings of October 2024** by consent (Page 1).

3. **Move to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment and Peer Review** (Page 4). Motion by Doug Haymans; second by Jason McNamee. Motion approved by consent (Page 4).

4. **Move to approve the Atlantic Cobia FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year, state compliance reports and de minimis requests for Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia and Florida** (Page 11). Motion by John Clark; second by Joe Grist. Motion passes (Page 11).

5. **Move to approve the Spanish Mackerel FMP Review for the 2023 and 2024 fishing years, state compliance reports and de minimis requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and Georgia** (Page 14). Motion by Roy Miller; second by Doug Haymans. Motion passes (Page 14).

6. **Move to approve Sara Pace of North Carolina and Chris McDonough of South Carolina to the Spanish Mackerel Plan Review Team** (Page 19). Motion by Chris Batsavage; second by Ben Dyar. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 19).

7. **Move to approve Robert Hale of Georgia to the South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel** (Page 19). Motion by Doug Haymans; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes (Page 19).

8. **Move to elect Erika Burgess as Vice Chair** (Page 19). Motion by Ben Dyar; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 19).

9. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 20).

## ATTENDANCE

### Board Members

Jason McNamee, RI (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)
Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, NY, proxy for E. Hasbrouck (GA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Adam Nowalksy, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
John Clark, DE (AA)
Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Carrie Kennedy, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Russel Dize, MD (GA)
David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (MD)
Joe Grist, VA (Acting AA)
Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Rep. Brian Turner, NC (LA)
Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA)
Robert Boyles, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Jeff Renchen, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Gary Jennings, FL (GA)
Ron Owens, PRFC

**(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)**

### Ex-Officio Members

Angela Giuliano, Technical Committee Chair

### Staff

Bob Beal
Toni Kerns
Tina Berger
Madeline Musante
Caitlin Starks
Emilie Franke
Tracey Bauer
James Boyle
Chelsea Tuohy
Katie Drew
Jeff Kipp
Samara Nehemiah

The Coastal Pelagics Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Wednesday, February 4, 2026, and was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chair Robert E. Beal.

## CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR ROBERT E. BEAL: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call the meeting of the Coastal Pelagics Management Board to order. My name is Bob Beal; I am the stand-in Chair for this meeting, Spud Woodward was not able to join in person and he asked me to step in as Chair. I am happy to do that.

Spud is online, so he is listening and will be hopefully participating in the meeting. It's just tricky to chair a meeting from Georgia rather than in the room here. That is why I am sitting up in front of the room instead of Spud. With that we'll get up and running for the Coastal Pelagic Board. I would like to go to Toni first, to announce all the commissioners that are participating virtually in this meeting rather than in the meeting room. Toni, go ahead.

MS. TONI KERNS: We have Emerson Hasbrouck from New York, I have Brian Turner from North Carolina, Carrie Kennedy from Maryland, Spud Woodward from Georgia, Malcolm Rhodes from South Carolina, and John Carmichael is not here today, and Emilie remind me who the NOAA rep is. No one from NOAA on today, okay there we go.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, Toni.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR BEAL: Moving along to the Board consent items. Are there any changes or additions or subtractions to the Board agenda? Not seeing any; any objection to approving the agenda as drafted? All right; the agenda stands as it is. If anything comes up under Other Business as the meeting goes along, we can add that towards the end of the meeting.

## APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR BEAL: Any comments or edits to the proceedings from October of 2024 for this Board? Not seeing any hands, those proceedings are approved.

Is there any public comment at this time for the Coastal Pelagics Board, either in the room or online? I see no hands in the room, and no hands online, so we'll keep moving right along.

## REVIEW AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF 2027 ATLANTIC COBIA STOCK ASSESSMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE

CHAIR BEAL: The first action item for the Board to consider is the Approval of the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment Terms of Reference and Angela Giuliano is going to present those. Whenever you're ready, Angela. Thanks for being here.

MS. ANGELA GIULIANO: I'll be reviewing the Draft Terms of Reference for the upcoming Cobia Stock Assessment. Just as some background, this stock assessment was initially started back in 2024 through SEDAR 95. While we had gotten that assessment underway and were in the middle of the Data Workshop, the assessment was paused due to the availability of a lead analyst. That assessment has remained paused until this year.

The assessment will be restarting here in early 2026, with an anticipated completion and Peer Review in 2027. Whereas the previous assessment was going through the SEDAR process entirely, this current version of the assessment will be coordinated through ASMFC for the Data, Methods and Assessment Workshops and SEDAR will be coordinating the Peer Review Workshop and Report.

This is similar to how some other Commission species are handled, such as menhaden and red drum. However, as part of the new SEDAR process and just the length of time that it's been, the assessment has been renumbered for SEDAR to now be SEDAR 107. Back in December of 2025, the Board approved the Stock Assessment Subcommittee membership for the cobia assessment, and so that is listed here on the slide, as well as the staff contacts.

Given the length of time and the restart of the assessment, the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee did meet in December to develop an updated draft terms of reference for Bord consideration. These were fairly similar to what was approved previously, it was mainly converting it from the CR format into the Commission format.

One thing to note is that there are actually two sets of TORs that were in the meeting materials. The first is the Assessment Terms of Reference, which give direction to the Stock Assessment Subcommittee, as they are preparing the assessment as well as the Peer Review Panel. These TORs basically mirror each other, so when I go through the following slides, I'm just going to read the assessment TORs and not the Peer Review Panel ones.

The first TOR is to identify the relevant ecosystem influences on the stock, including impacts to range shifts and/or expansions. Consider findings as appropriate when addressing other TORs. Report how the findings were considered under impacted TORs. The second Term of Reference is to investigate all available life history data, including but not limited to age, reproductive characteristics, stock structure and natural mortality.

Describe the spatial and temporal distribution of the data and characterize the uncertainty and error. Also discuss the strength and weaknesses of the data sources when justifying inclusion or elimination of datasets. The third TOR is to investigate available fishery independent and dependent datasets, again characterizing precision, accuracy and uncertainty for any available abundance indices, as well as commercial and recreational landings and discards.

Include the estimation of length and age distribution of landings and discards, and discard mortality is feasible. As part of this TOR, we also are instructed to review the new MRIP estimates of catch and effort for use in the assessment if available, and again, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the available data sources and justify inclusion for elimination of the datasets. The fourth Term of Reference is to develop models used to estimate population parameters such as fishing mortality and abundance and reference points, and analyze model performance. Provide comparisons between the current assessment and the prior benchmark assessment SEDAR 58, where feasible. This includes providing model diagnostics, sensitivity analyses, retrospective analysis of the model results and a historical retrospective.

TOR 5 is to update or redefine biological reference points. For example, point estimates are proxies of BMSY, SSBMSY, FMSY and MSY. Define stock status based on reference points where possible and compare these reference points from this assessment with what is known about the general life history of the exploited stock.

Compare and contrast the reference points and time series estimates in this assessment with values from the previous benchmark SEDAR 58 as feasible, and comment on the impacts of changes in data assumptions for assessment methods on estimated population conditions. TOR 6 is if a minority report has been filed to explain the majority reasoning against adopting the approach suggested in that report.

A minority report should explain the reasoning against adopting the approach suggested by the majority. TOR 7 is to develop detailed short- and long-term prioritized lists of recommendations for future research, data collection and assessment methodology. TOR 8 is to recommend timing of the next benchmark assessment and any intermediate update, if necessary, relative to the biology and current management of cobia.

This last TOR, TOR 9 is specific to the Peer Review Panel, directing them to prepare a peer review report summarizing their evaluation of the stock assessment and addressing each peer review Term of Reference as part of that it requires them to complete and submit their report within four weeks of the Workshop conclusion. Those are the TORs extracted by the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee for the upcoming benchmark and I can now take any questions from the Board about them.

CHAIR BEAL: Before we get to questions, I just want to announce that there is a NOAA representative participating in the meeting now, they just logged in, Rick De Victor from the Southeast Regional Office is online. We're all set with NOAA representation. Questions on the Terms of Reference. Jason.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Thanks, Angela, good trip through the TORs there. I had a quick question, actually if we could flip back to TOR 1. I wonder, this is the ecosystem influences and I just was curious as to how, you might not have had a chance to talk about this yet, because I know we're early in the kind of revamping of all of this.

It's going to be just like a little report, like when we were doing black sea bass they had this ESP report. Is it that kind of thing or is it going to be more integrated with the actual modeling, or is it just going to be maybe like a paragraph or two in the report that says what you looked at. I'm just curious about how this one kind of will play into the product that we see at the end.

MS. GIULIANI: At a minimum, I think it will be a literature review with some sort of summary. I think the ability to incorporate it into the modeling really will depend on what model we end up going with, given the data limitations, as well as what data are available. At this point not too much information to offer, but it is definitely something to be thinking about with cobia, given the range of expansion shift of the stock.

CHAIR BEAL: Other questions or comments on the Terms of Reference? Jason, again.

DR. McNAMEE: If no one else is going to ask another question, I will. This is just given like some of the background with the model for cobia. I think there is like a candidate model people are thinking about using. I wondered, and I think there is like limited resources here, so I'm not expecting we're going to be running like six different models or anything like that.

But I am concerned, I think there were concerns about convergence of the model or the model working the last go around. I wondered, there is a strategy that, I think we used it here at the Commission as well, but certainly with the Feds where you have like, I don't think we call it the same name, but there was a time we were calling it the Plan B model.

It's just sort of like a simple version in the background, so you are not left with nothing in the end, if your kind of main model doesn't work. Is that something that is being considered? Is it like in, could you assume TOR 5, maybe, which is the one that talks about the models, if that is being contemplated, or if not if it could be.

MS. GIULIANO: The hope is to continue using the BAM model, the Beaufort Assessment Model, which has been used in the past. Cobia is kind of in a weird situation between being a full benchmark versus an update. One of the limitations from last time when the assessment was getting started was concern over the index that was used last time, which was from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and whether we can update that with changes to the fishery.

I think getting an index, developing an index is probably one of the first priorities there, and then yes, I know last time we had talked about potentially having some data limited options for modeling. But with the current iteration of our new

SAS, we have not gone over those with the details. They came up before, we'll see where the current group ends up.

CHAIR BEAL: One of the other things that this assessment is relying on is the new recalibrated MRIP data that we can do FES estimates. We're not exactly sure when that will be available. You know we heard, "we're still under review" yesterday when Richard Cody gave a presentation.

But we're hoping it will be summer, whatever exactly that might mean, that we get that data. That might be a bottleneck. Any other comments or questions on Terms of Reference? Dr. McNamee, are you good? Is there a motion to approve these terms of reference? I think there is a motion drafted that will go up on the board momentarily. Mr. Haymans.

MR. DOUG HAYMANS: I **move to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment and Peer Review.**

CHAIR BEAL: Is there a second to that motion? Dr. McNamee, thank you. Any justification or discussion? I'll start with you, Doug, in case there is any.

MR. HAYMANS: No, I thought we had good discussion of the terms from Jason, and I have no issues with them, move forward.

CHAIR BEAL: Jason says he's all set as well. Any other comments or **any objection around the table to approving these Terms of Reference? Not seeing any; they stand approved**, thank you.

## REVIEW NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE FOR COBIA MANAGEMENT

CHAIR BEAL: That brings us to the Next Steps in the Timeline for Cobia Management. Now where do we go from here in the short term while we wait for the assessment to get completed? Emilie is going to give a presentation on that.

## PRESENTATION OF SPECIFICATION SETTING PROCESS, RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES, AND CONFIDENCE INTERVAL APPROACH

MS. EMILIE FRANKE: The purpose of this presentation is to remind the Board sort of where we are, what is coming up with cobia management in the next year, and some of the timing considerations and challenges to keep in mind. Just sort of as an overview here, so coming up this year the Board may consider new specifications for 2027 and potentially beyond that, and also consider recreational management measures for 2027 and potentially beyond that.

A couple things to keep in mind is the revised MRIP, when that is available and what the impacts of that may be. Also, the timing of the stock assessment, which is anticipated to inform measures in 2028. Some of the challenges there with the timing lining up. Then kind of in the background just a reminder of the confidence interval approach, which is something that the Board can use if the Board would like.

But just a reminder of what that is, and it is sort of in the background if needed. First on specifications. The current specifications for cobia expire at the end of this year, the end of 2026. The total angler harvest quotas for both sectors are 80,112 fish. This is the same quota that has been in place since 2020.

With these specifications expiring, the Board would consider new specifications for at least next year, 2027. Per the new Addendum, the Board can set specifications for up to 5 years, so potentially up to 2031 if the Board would like. One timing thing to keep in mind, as I mentioned, is the stock assessment, which is anticipated to be complete to inform quota levels in 2028. Just sort of keeping in mind when that stock assessment may become available.

The Cobia TC as in past specification cycles will plan to meet this year, sometime prior to the summer meeting to discuss any TC recommendations on the total harvest quota for 2027. However, as was discussed at the last time the Board met, there is a bit of a challenge in that we have very limited information to inform these 2027 specifications. Projections from the last cobia stock assessment only extended through 2024.

We're in the same data limited situation the Board was in a couple years ago when the Board was considering these current 2024 to 2026 specs. Just sort of a reminder that the TC is going to have very limited information to work with there. The next thing coming down the pipe this year is the Regional Recreational Measures. When the Board sets specifications, that triggers an evaluation of average recreational harvest against the harvest targets, to determine any changes to the recreational measures. As a reminder, we are now in this regional framework. We have our northern region, which is Rhode Island through Virginia, and the southern region, which is North Carolina through Georgia. For any evaluation, the evaluation only includes years that have been under the same recreational management measures.

Management measures did change last year in 2025 for the northern region. That means that when we do this evaluation at the end of this year, there is only going to be one year of data, 2025, to include in that evaluation to determine what measures would be next year. That is sort of the big challenge there, that the Board had identified at the last meeting.

Then a couple other things to think about here as well. We have this revised MRIP time series, and that revised time series could potentially change the allocation percentages between the two regions. The regional allocations are based on landings from 2014 to 2023, and the FMP does allow the Board to update those allocation percentages via Board vote, if those underlying MRIP data are updated.

The Board anticipated the MRIP time series might be updated, so the Board has the ability to recalculate the 2014 to 2023 landings, to potentially update those allocation percentages. Depending on the timing of the release of these MRIP data, there could be time to update those allocations and regional targets in time for this year's evaluation to inform 2027 measures.

That is sort of one factor to keep in mind. The next again is the stock assessment. Again, anticipated to inform 2028 management, so if the stock assessment leads to a new harvest quota in 2028 this would also update those regional harvest targets for 2028. Then there would be another evaluation to inform 2028 measures, so potentially there could be two evaluations for changes to recreational measures in two consecutive years.

In the past the Board has actually encountered this challenge of having two evaluations of recreational measures and making changes two years in a row. Back in 2023, the Board was doing an evaluation for 2024. However, the Board was anticipating things might change again in 2025 with the new allocations.

In that situation at the time, the Board did task the TC with evaluating the impact of staying status quo for that one year in 2024. Then making the changes then later in 2025, once things were updated with the allocations. That is what happened. The Board did decide to keep status quo in '24, and then reevaluate things in '25 after those reallocations.

Just a reminder of a similar situation the Board was in a couple years ago. Then finally, the last thing I want to cover. Again, this is sort of in the background in the FMP available to the Board if the Board desired is the confidence interval approach. The confidence interval approach allows the Board to change the method for these recreational harvest evaluations.

Currently we're comparing the average harvest across years to the target. Alternatively, this provision that would allow the Board to instead compare the 95% confidence intervals around those harvest estimates to the target, to determine if any reductions need to be taken. I'm not going to get into the details any further than that, but last time the Board met the TC did take a look at what that approach might look like as applied to data a couple years ago. But the TC noted that more Board discussion would be helpful here. The Board agreed more discussion would be helpful, but it was a little unclear sort of how to proceed and exactly what questions to ask. Again, we have the challenges of thinking about this confidence interval approach.

At the same time, we're thinking about specifications and the timing of the revised MRIP and the stock assessment, so a lot kind of going on in the next few years. Just looking ahead from a staff perspective. Just looking ahead from a staff perspective. Before the 2026 meeting, as I mentioned, the summer meeting. The TC will plan to meet to discuss any recommendations for the 2027 quota.

Then in the summer meeting the Board would consider at least the 2027 quota. Again, the Board could consider setting additional years as well. Then by the annual meeting, there would be a TC report on the evaluation of the regional harvest against the targets for the Board to consider 2027 rec measures.

Then as revised MRIP become available, we'll keep the Board updated on what potential regional allocations might look like with the new revised MRIP data. Then next year we will anticipate the stock assessment report. From a staff perspective this is what the year ahead is looking like. If there are any Board questions or guidance on these TC tasks coming up, today would be helpful to discuss that. But happy to take any questions.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, Emilie. Obviously, there are a lot of moving parts there, a lot of challenges and timing issues with the recalibration of MRIP data and the pending stock assessment, and Technical Committee work and just a lot of moving parts.

The question and the goal of this conversation is one, to make sure the entire Board fully understands everything that Emilie just said, and if you have any questions this is a great time to ask those. Then the second part is what guidance if any does this Board want to provide to the Technical Committee for additional analysis to inform some of these pending decisions that the Board will be faced with.

With that explanation, are there any questions on what Emilie said and timing and all these moving parts? I think this may be a cascading thing. The first question may lead into about ten more. Are there any questions, or does everyone fully understand what Emilie said? Doug, you look like you are reluctantly thinking about it.

MR. HAYMANS: No, I have a comment.

CHAIR BEAL: Okay, go ahead, a comment is great.

## PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO COBIA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON UPCOMING TASKS IF NEEDED

MR. HAYMANS: Just based on the number of moving parts, I'm perfectly content with status quo where we are through the 2028 assessment. I would think what you've got laid out there is fine. But I don't have a burning desire to reallocate or bump the quota right now. That is just from my perspective.

CHAIR BEAL: Other thoughts. Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: A question. I'm thinking a little bit about, you said two things, thank you for the presentation first. Then you said two things in there that I'm wondering. I'm trying to like put them together. The first is, so we had consistent measures and then we didn't have consistent measures. It's only one year that we have that information on.

How does that connect in with the confidence interval approach? Where does the confidence interval come from? Maybe I'm not kind of thinking of the data correctly. But I'm just having trouble thinking about, like what would the confidence intervals be, based on if we're only looking at a single year of information?

MS. FRANKE: For the confidence interval approach, in the FMP it is laid out in that if the majority of years you're looking at, if the confidence interval is above the target, then you would need a reduction. Obviously, if we're just looking at one year of data it seems like it would just be what is happening in that one year, you know where is the target relative to that confidence interval.

Similar to if you keep the average approach would we just stick to sort of one year of data that we're looking at. The FMP never really got into the scenario of what if we only have one year of data. I think when the FMP was originally developed, you know there was an assumption that there would be at least a couple years under the same management regime. But because of all the timing challenges these past two years, these ended up sort of out of alignment with all these timing aspects.

CHAIR BEAL: Other comments or questions? Yes, Ben.

MR. BEN DYAR: Kind of a comment and then maybe some questions. I kind of second Doug's comment, looking at what we see now. We've talked about management whiplash in the past, going from what we've had, at least in South Carolina, standards that have been set for quite a while, and then all of a sudden, they changed them, and then potentially in the very next year changed them again.

There are obviously concerns there, especially with our legislative process and trying to change those things in South Carolina through that without having a Commission. I don't know when that comes into play. But it's not until summer that we need to really make that decision. But just wanted to get that on the record.

Then kind of following up on Jay's comment. According to FMP, I understand the confidence interval. When can the Board determine that, at any time? Like when would we want to time that along with the stock assessment, and also one you did clear up, a very large concerns about using confidence intervals. But just curious about when the timing of that would be.

MS. FRANKE: For the confidence interval approach. The Board can vote at any time to switch to that approach, so there is no sort of constraints on when the Board can do it. It is essentially the Board at any time can determine, you know we don't think the average approach is appropriate anymore. We would like to switch to doing the confidence interval approach. At any time, the Board can decide to do that.

CHAIR BEAL: Yes, Jesse.

MR. JESSE HORNSTEIN: Yes, I support waiting to change stuff until we have more information. But I also think it's important that the TC looks at any potential issues with maintaining status quo for the next couple years, so we have something to be more comfortable with, with that decision if we do.

CHAIR BEAL: Dr. McNamee.

DR. McNAMEE: I appreciate the comment that Jesse just made, and so I was kind of wondering, have there been like some indicators that we can look at? I know there is just generally speaking not a ton of data. We don't have like trawl surveys and things like that for cobia.

But to get to what Jesse just said, having some indicators that we can look at I think would be helpful to give us some comfort. I am in alignment here. There are so many things like fundamental things like data that are changing, that it will be really hard to make an informed judgment on how to move.

But I mean if we saw troubling signal in something in what we have available to us, I think it is something we would want to consider. I don't have anything specific for you, maybe like an MRIP CPUE type of an index or something like that would be valuable. But anything that the Technical Committee can kind of put their hands on and show as, here is what is available.

Don't put too much stock in this one. It's not a stock assessment; it's just an indicator. Like we understand all of that. But just to give us something to kind of look at to get some confidence. We're okay. We can kind of pitch this out a little while longer before we have better information to make judgments on. That is what I'm hoping we could get.

MR. FRANKE: The last time I mentioned that a couple years ago when the Board tasked the TC with looking at what is the impact if we just stayed status quo for a year before we changed things. I believe the TC looked at essentially just realized harvest against what the projections used as the assumed removals and sort of compared that and provided an analysis to the Board. I think the TC could do the same thing looking at realized harvest.

Outside of that I don't think there are really many other indicators. But from what it sounds like you said, Jesse, Ben and Doug, it sounds like there is interest in the TC doing a similar analysis this time to look at what the impact if you stayed status quo for 2027, and waited for the assessment to change recreational measures. It sounds like there is support for that. I think the TC would have that on their list of analyses for later this year.

As far as timing for that, I think we would actually bring that back at the annual meeting, so the summer meeting would be focused on the total harvest quota levels, and then at the annual meeting you would come back and say, based on that total harvest quota, if we looked at just 2025 what would that look like. If we set status quo what would that look like? Maybe we could be done in time for the summer meeting with both, we'll have to see. But either the summer or annual meeting for all of these things.

CHAIR BEAL: Other comments or questions on that path forward and the timing of that? I thought Emilie was going to volunteer for the spring meeting, since she will be out on maternity leave and she can task everybody else with doing work while she's enjoying a new extended family. Is there anything else on this issue?

The TC, Angela are you comfortable with the tasking? Okay, so we'll go forward with that and as the meeting goes along if there is something you guys think of, we can come back to this, we have time if we start a day early.

## CONSIDER APPROVAL OF ATLANTIC COBIA FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2024 FISHING YEAR

CHAIR BEAL: Moving along we'll go to the FMP Review of State Compliance for Atlantic Cobia. Emilie, please.

MS. FRANKE: I will get into the FMP Review for cobia. Just starting with Status of the FMP. Again, we're working under Amendment 1, Addendum I and the most recent Addendum II that moved us to that recreational regional management framework. I mentioned you've had the same total harvest quota for cobia in place since 2020.

The allocation of that quota is 96% to recreational, 4% to commercial. We're focused on the FMP Review for fishing year 2024. In 2024 there were no management changes so things were the same as the prior couple of years. Just as a reminder, there are no cobia monitoring requirements in the FMP.

For the commercial fishery, it's managed with the coastwide commercial quota, again 4% of that overall total quota. There are minimum size limits, 2 fish per person possession limit, and a 6 fish per vessel maximum. Then we also have a commercial closure trigger, so for all those non de minimis states.

If all those landings reach the specific trigger, then the fishery is closed and the states have a 30 days' notice for that closure. For the 2024 recreational fishery, we're still under the state-by-state allocations at that time, so we have those non de minimis states again have a minimum size limit. The season and vessel limits vary by state, but there is a maximum six-fish per vessel and a one-fish per person bag limit.

Then for all the de minimis states that's from Maryland northward, states could either choose to match their nearest non-de minimis state, so Maryland and the Potomac River matched Virginia and then Rhode Island through Delaware implemented the sort of standard de minimis measures, which were a lower minimum size and a one-fish vessel limit.

Again, last year we switched over to the regional framework, but the northern region did have to take a reduction. They increased their minimum size, have a two-fish vessel limit. Just a reminder, that did happen last year, but today we are focused on the 2024 fishing year. Status of the Stock, Angela just went over this, but again, this last assessment was a while ago, had a terminal year of 2017, indicated the stock at the time was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. We have our new assessment anticipated to be complete next year, with a terminal year of 2025. As far as status of the fishery, in 2024 total landings across both sectors were about 1.7 million pounds. That broke down into almost exactly what the allocation is, about 4% commercial, 96% recreational.

This was about a 40% decrease from 2023, and this was driven by a decrease in recreational landings in '24. On the commercial side things actually slightly increased from '23, '24 commercial landings were about 70,546 pounds. The commercial quota was not exceeded and the fishery did close on December 18, based on that closure trigger.

Then Virginia and North Carolina comprised the majority of commercial cobia landings, over 96%. As you can see here this is commercial landings over time. That black line the last few years that is the commercial quota. You can see landings have been relatively stable, sort of hovering right around that quota.

On the recreational side, in '24 landings were about 54,000 fish or about 1.6 million pounds. Again, this was a decrease by about 45% from 2023. It was the lowest harvest since 2017. The harvest was obviously well below the coastwide quota, which is about 77,000 fish and also well below the ten-year average harvest as well.

Sort of aligning with that decreasing harvest, you could see directed trips also decrease by about 21%. Live releases, about 80% of the 2024 catch was released alive. Here you can see recreational harvest and then again, the last few years you can see that from the quota. We tend to see this we had some high years where we exceeded the quota interspersed with some lower years we were below, or in the case of 2025, well below the quota.

By state in 2024 Virginia harvested the vast majority with the other states comprising less than 10% each. North Carolina did specifically note that their harvest estimates for '23 and '24 were very low, compared to prior years. They noted that historically the primary weight of cobia typically would arrive in late May, be around for about six weeks.

But the past few years it seems like cobia have been migrating to the Chesapeake Bay much earlier, so they have been available in North Carolina waters for a much shorter period of time. South Carolina's 2024 estimate was also very low compared to prior years, and it was their lowest since 2017.

As a reminder, there were federal fisheries closures in 2016 and 2017. Generally, the PRT continues to emphasize that there are a lot of factors influencing these changes in harvest from year to year, including the stock distribution in both north to south, inshore/offshore, the state regulatory changes and effort.

As far as PRT comments and recommendations, the PRT found no inconsistencies in implementation of the FMP. As far as de minimis on the recreational side, Rhode Island, Delaware, Maryland and Florida all request and do qualify for de minimis. On the commercial side, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia and Florida all request and do qualify for de minimis. The PRT notes that multiple states, especially in the Mid-Atlantic, could potentially exceed de minimis thresholds over the next few years if cobia landings do continue to increase in the Mid-Atlantic. As I mentioned, some years landings are quite high in some of these states, some years they are quite low. What this means is on the commercial side if you become a non de minimis state, then you have to submit weekly in-season landings reports to the Commission that we monitor toward that commercial closure.

On the recreational side the de minimis designation actually no longer has any impact, because we've moved to that regional management framework. All the states in a region have the same measures, so there is no differentiation between de minimis measures and non de minimis measures there.

The PRT just notes that this new assessment is really important. It can add several years of data, 2018 through 2025, so that will capture the recent trends of the increased landings in the Mid-Atlantic, particularly in Virgina and the transition to commission only management. The PRT emphasizes the importance of incorporating the new revised MRIP into the assessment. Happy to take any questions.

CHAIR BEAL: Any questions on the FMP Review or PRT comments on state compliance? Yes, Roy Miller, please.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Thank you, Emilie, for the summary. What was the de minimis threshold, in terms of recreational landings percentage?

MS. FRANKE: For recreational it's less than 1% of the coastwide landings for 2 out of the past 3 years. For commercial it is less than 2%.

MR. MILLER: If I may follow up. Just out of curiosity, Maryland was 3%, does that mean they are likely to go off de minimis?

MS. FRANKE: That's a good question. In 2024 Maryland was 3% and Angela can speak more to this, but the MRIP estimates for Maryland the prior years, '23 and '22 I think were both 0. I think Maryland is one of the examples of the difficulty of capturing cobia landings through MRIP. Obviously, cobia is being caught in Maryland, but Maryland has had a couple of 0 MRIP estimate years so it's hard to say what that's going to look like.

CHAIR BEAL: Emilie, I'll take Chair's prerogative and ask a question. Florida is qualified for de minimis for recreational and commercial fisheries; however, they are not part of the management unit that ASMFC manages, which is the Florida/Georgia line northward up to Rhode Island. Does this Board need to grant them de minimis, and does that provide a benefit to Florida?

MS. FRANKE: My understanding is that because Florida has been on this Board and they do catch cobia, but they catch a different stock, the Gulf stock. Essentially, Florida submits their compliance report every year that says we have caught 0 Atlantic cobia, and so it's sort of an administrative step to send out that compliance report, but they are part of the Gulf stock.

CHAIR BEAL: All right, great, thank you that's helpful. Any other questions or comments? Not seeing any; is there a motion to approve the FMP Review and de minimis requests? John Clark. I think a motion will come up on the board momentarily.

MR. JOHN CLARK: **Move to approve the Atlantic Cobia FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year, State Compliance Reports and de minimis requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia and Florida.**

CHAIR BEAL: Okay, thank you, John, is there a second to the motion? Joe Grist, thank you. Any comments on the motion? I don't know, John, if you have any justification.

MR. CLARK: No, I think it was all well explained by Emilie.

CHAIR BEAL: **Any objection to approving the FMP Review and de minimis requests? Not seeing any; this motion stands approved**. I think one administrative thing we may want to consider. Does it make sense and is it worth the burden to Florida to submit a State Compliance Report saying they didn't catch an Atlantic cobia group and they are part of the Gulf group.

Is that necessary for this Board to see that every year, or it just an assumption based on where the line is drawn in this FMP? I don't know if Florida has a comment on that or if any other Board members. I'm just looking to take away a burden from Florida, because it really doesn't serve a lot of value to this Board. I don't know, Jeff, if you have a comment please go ahead.

MR. JEFFREY RENCHEN: It's not much of a burden for us to submit this report, and it keeps us involved as well, in case the stock boundaries were to change. It kind of keeps an eye on that as well. It doesn't really create much of a burden to add that to this point of view,

CHAIR BEAL: Thank you, Jeff. Yes, Toni.

MS. KERNS: I think, and staff can evaluate this. You can even continue to send us in your compliance report thing you have 0 harvest. But I actually don't think we need for you to ask for de minimis, because you're not in the management unit at this time. Obviously, if that were to change ever, we can make that change.

But because you're not in the management unit, you are not obligated to move forward any of the regulations. Therefore, you're getting de minimis for nothing that I am aware of. That part doesn't really make sense to me, but we can evaluate it and then get back to you and Erika.

CHAIR BEAL: Yes, one option may be that Florida continues to submit the reports as they are, and then in the FMP Review we note; Florida submitted a report and didn't catch any cobia from the Atlantic group, and leave it at that. Then maybe we don't have to go through the de minimis process for Florida. But we can think about that, I'm not pushing it away. Ben, do you have a comment?

MR. DYAR: I didn't know if they're declared interest, is there a requirement to provide some type of documentation of harvest and catch to that peer review, number one, and then number two, I mean obviously it would be something different, wouldn't want to put extra burden if not necessary, but as Jeff commented, it's really not a big lift, and especially with the upcoming conversations we were having regarding kind of declared interest in voting rights, privileges and things like that, see how that kind of comes out to change something now preemptive to that. I would just maybe suggest maybe stay in the course. If it's not a big lift and it's not a big deal, that would just come back to my two cents.

CHAIR BEAL: Yes, that is a fair comment. Thanks, Ben. Joe, did you have your hand up?

MR. CIMINO: Just I was hoping to get maybe an update on the stock boundaries, like knowing that an assessment is coming up. Just getting a feel for where that exploration has been and where it may go in the near future.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, so part of the last assessment SEDAR 58, there was a Full Stock ID Workshop conducted through SEDAR. The recommendation coming out of that workshop was to have that boundary at the Florida/Georgia line. For this assessment there is not a full workshop, so there is no sort of plan to change the stock boundary.

You know the Terms of Reference do include a review of any new data, specifically I know there has been some acoustic counting, so these would have been published in the past few years, just sort of update the background on that stock ID and to discuss any uncertainty and things like that. But through this assessment the stock boundary would not change.

CHAIR BEAL: Anything else on this topic before we go into Spanish mackerel FMP Review? All right, not seeing any.

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF SPANISH MACKEREL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2023 AND 2024 FISHING YEARS**

CHAIR BEAL: Emilie, if you could present the Spanish mackerel FMP Review and States Compliance Reports, please.

MS. FRANKE: Switching gears to Spanish mackerel. Today we're looking at the FMP Review for the past two years, so 2023 and 2024 fishing years. As far as the FMP, there haven't been any management changes at the Commission level since 2011; that was the Omnibus Amendment.

The management unit is Rhode Island through Florida, only the Atlantic Coast of Florida, with the exception of Connecticut. Similar to cobia, there are no Spanish mackerel monitoring requirements in the FMP. The FMP is managed through complementary management with the South Atlantic Council, and Council staff will be providing an update on Council activity right after this presentation.

There are some differences between the Federal and Interstate Spanish mackerel FMPs. The Board has been briefed on these and the Board has noted in the past that the Board would discuss these differences the next time the Board takes any sort of Spanish mackerel action. The recreational fishery and commercial fishery are both managed using a minimum size limit.

There is also a creel limit for the rec fishery and some gear restrictions for both sectors. Then the commercial fishery is subject to daily trip limits. New York through Georgia is a daily 3500-pound trip limit. Florida is a little bit different, sort of a step-down approach, depending on how much of the quota has been taken. Status of the stock, the last Spanish mackerel assessment was completed in 2022, with a terminal year of 2020. It indicated the stock was not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, based on a three-year average fishing mortality. The assessment team noted that in the terminal year of the assessment the fishing mortality rate was above the threshold. If that higher fishing mortality rate were to continue, it's possible the stock could fall into an overfishing status.

I'll get into sort of the stats here for '23 and '24, just a reminder that all the landings in the FMP are calendar year, and again, any Florida landings are Atlantic coast only. In '23 and '24 total landings, in '23 was about 8 million pounds, in '24, 8.2 million pounds – pretty similar. Comprised of about between 33 to 36% commercial, 64 to 67% recreational.

On the commercial side both years, landings were about 2.7/2.8 million pounds. Only three states have directed Spanish mackerel commercial fisheries; that's Florida, North Carolina and Virginia. In commercial landings you saw a peak in 2021, followed by lower levels the past three years. This was largely driven by decreases that we saw in Florida, which I'll touch on in a little bit.

Another sort of thing to note is that Virginia's commercial landings for the past six years have been higher than their landings in the previous decade. Virginia noted there are a lot of factors here, one of which is their extended drift net/gill net program that has become a new licensed fishery in the state as of last year.

There is also a lot to think about in terms of fish availability, such as when are the Spanish mackerel moving into the Bay and if those fish are available. Here are the commercial landings over time. Again, you can clearly see that peak in ’21, and the past three years landings have been at a bit of a lower level.

On the recreational side, landings in ’23 and ’24 were between 5.2 and 5.5 million pounds. Again, this is a decrease from the peak in 2021, but above the ten-year average. Florida and North Carolina account for the majority of landings. As far as live releases, we saw a decrease in 2023 and then again in 2024.

These live releases comprised between 40 to 49 percent of the catch those two years. Here you can see the recreational landings in blue, and then the number of fish released alive in red. Again, you can clearly see that peak in 2021 and then the lower levels the past three years. A couple of state-specific notes here.

North Carolina did flag is MRIP estimates from 2024. Their 2024 harvest estimates were much higher than their ten-year average, 77% higher in weight. Their release estimates were about 30% higher than the ten-year average. North Carolina noted this 2024 value seems to be unusually high, and diverging from anecdotal observation we noted potentially it was skewed by a limited number of intercepts in 2024.

They also noted their PSEs for 2024 were a little bit higher than PSEs in prior years. As far as some of the comments about the decreases we’ve seen in Florida. Florida noted that there have been increases in areas that have been closed to vessels associated with space launches, and so that has prevented access to fishing areas and that has potentially contributed to the decrease in effort and decrease in landings. Then during the port meetings conducted by the South Atlantic Council, Florida stakeholders noted several concerns, including concerns about shark depredation, water quality, weather conditions in federal water, the potential of fish shifting more northward, being less available, and changing effort dynamics, all impacting the Florida Spanish mackerel fisheries.

As far as the PRT comments and recommendations. All states in ’23 and ’24 did implement management consistent with the FMP except for one inconsistency that has since been addressed. The Potomac River Fisheries Commission had not implemented the daily commercial trip limits of those 3500 pounds.

After they received notification of this, they were able to implement that within a couple of months, so that is now effective. Then as far as de minimis, if a state has their 3-year average of total landings is less than 1% of the coastwide total they receive de minimis status. Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware and Georgia all request and do qualify.

I will note for this FMP there is no specific de minimis difference in the regulations, and there are no monitoring requirements, there is no difference in monitoring requirements either. PRT recommendations, just some recommendations to better understand regional dynamics and sort of paying attention to any changes in catch by region.

To better understand the life history components, sort of in conjunction with the stock assessments and to fully utilize available state data, especially trying to get some more data from Virginia northward. Proceed to investigate discard mortality and environmental drivers affecting the distribution, and also social and economic drivers affecting effort. These are all things that were brought up at the Council’s port meetings. Then again, continue coordination between the Commission and the Council to address any differences in the FMP. Happy to take any questions.

CHAIR BEAL: Any questions on the Spanish mackerel presentation? Yes, Joe Grist.

MR. JOSEPH GRIST: I noted you made call-out of my drift/gillnet fishery, which is predominantly targeting Spanish mackerel. I don't think I would call that a substantial fishery for cobia. I think overall they just sent back to me about 500 pounds of cobia in 2025 or the 300 in 2024. I think compared to overall landings that is pretty insignificant numbers. It's definitely not targeting cobia; I'm not sure whey that got called out. I'm sure it had something to do with our report and we'll look into it.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, Joe. Comments or questions. Not seeing any; is there a motion to approve the FMP Review and de minimis requests? Roy Miller, there will be a motion coming up momentarily.

MR. MILLER**: Move to approve the Spanish mackerel FMP Review for the 2023 and 2024 Fishing Year, State Compliance Reports and de minimis requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware and Georgia.**

CHAIR BEAL: Is there any second to that? Doug Haymans, thank you. Any justification, Roy, or pretty self-explanatory?

MR. MILLER: Pretty self-explanatory.

CHAIR BEAL: **Any objection to the approval of the motion that is on the board? Not seeing any that motion stands approved**. Thank you, Emilie, for both of those reports and that brings us to Spanish mackerel, an update. Spanish mackerel Council activity for the Soth Atlantic Council. Christina Wiegand, Council staff is online, and we're ready to go whenever you are, Christina, thanks for being here.

**UPDATE FROM SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL ON SPANISH MACKEREL COUNCIL ACTIVITY**

MS. CHRISTINA WIEGAND CURTIS: Thank you so much. For those who don't know me, my name is Christina Weigand Curtis, I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist with the Council, and the lead for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP. I was asked to just briefly brief you all on where the Council stands in terms of Atlantic Spanish mackerel management.

If you all remember way back in 2024 now, the South Atlantic Council did a series of mackerel port meetings all up and down the coast, and the purpose of these meetings was to sort of acknowledge that there were significant changes happening in the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, and try to get a holistic view of those fisheries by working with stakeholders in all of these communities.

I'm not going to go over that full report today, but there is a link to it on the Council's website and on the presentation. That process wrapped up at the end of 2024, beginning of 2025, and we presented the Council with the results of that at their March 2025 meeting, going over sort of individual themes seen in each state, as well as similarities and differences seen up and down the coast.

The Council requested that that would go to their Mackerel/Cobia Advisory Panel first and then to have staff bring back detailed information on specific regulatory measures that the Council could take in June of 2025. We brought this information to the Mackerel AP. They discussed the Mackerel/Cobia Report. They were also provided a sort of refresher on the SEDAR 78 stock assessment and details on revisions to the FMP Goals and Objectives.

They provided comments on all three of those things, but the important thing here is that the Advisory Panel did pass a motion recommending that the Council request an update of the Spanish mackerel overfishing limit and ABC recommendations based on the results of that new

FES Pilot Study before implementing any new catch levels, specifically those coming out of SEDAR 78.

That AP report was provided to the Council at their June 2025 meeting, and in particular response to that motion from the AP, they decided to postpone work to address those Spanish mackerel catch levels coming from SEDAR 78 until the results of that FES Pilot Study were received and could be incorporated into an updated stock assessment. They also requested that we work with the Science Center to see if we could move the next Spanish mackerel stock assessment to occur sooner in the schedule.

With regard to recommendations from port meetings, there was a desire to sort of wait until we had a new Spanish mackerel stock assessment and catch level recommendations. There was some discussion about sort of looking at recommendations from port meetings from the regulatory standpoint, but as of right now that work is not currently prioritized on the Council's workplan.

August 2025 the SEDAR Steering Committee did meet and did agree to sort of rejiggle the schedule a little bit to get the Spanish mackerel stock assessment a little bit earlier, so Spanish mackerel will now be occurring before the vermillion snapper stock assessment. It' schedule to start in 2027.

If everything is on schedule things would go to the Council. That would go to the Council probably late 2027, early 2028. In December the Council did get that updated presentation on the FES Pilot Study. I'm not going to go into that in detail here, other than just to note that the tentative plan is to have full MRIP estimates for Wave 1 in 2027, and the Council really noted the importance of having those recalibrated FES data available as soon as possible.

We remain sort of cautiously optimistic that recalibrated data will be able to go into the Spanish mackerel stock assessment by its start in 2027. With that there is nothing related to Spanish mackerel that is currently on the Council's workplan. Again, they would be looking to sort of address Spanish mackerel, as well as recommendations from port meetings once we have results from this upcoming stock assessment scheduled to begin in early 2027.

With that I am happy to take any questions. I also just wanted to say thank you for all of the work that the state agency reps and staff and Commission staff did to help make the mackerel port meetings endeavor such a success. I know John Carmichael has passed along our appreciation before, but since I'm the one here today, I wanted to sort of reiterate how much we appreciated all of the support during that process.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thank you, Christina, and we will also return the thanks to you and the Council for making the effort to go beyond the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction and get perspectives from participants in the fishery north of North Carolina, so thank you for that. Any questions on process and progress with the South Atlantic Council. Chris Batsavage.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Thank you, Christina, for the update. Based on this timeline with your Spanish mackerel assessment, hopefully being done by 2027 and South Atlantic Council considering the results of that assessment for an amendment. What do you think the timeline would be for that amendment to be complete, because I suspect it's a pretty long list of issues that could be addressed in that amendment. Then I'll probably have a follow up.

MS. CURTIS: Thanks, Chris, that's a great question. I think it will ultimately depend on how the Council decides to sort of package addressing catch levels from the stock assessment, versus some of the things that came out of the port meetings.

If they decide to move forward with two separate amendments, catch level implementation could move quite a bit faster than maybe some of the port meeting recommendations that could be a little bit controversial, would require a more detailed amendment, likely one where we have to collaborate with the Gulf. That would sort, timing will ultimately depend on how the Council packages things, if they keep catch levels and port meetings separate or if they wrap it all into one large amendment.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Thank you, that sounds like a logical strategy, kind of breaking this up with the other items outside of catch levels taking a little more time, I suspect. I think it's probably worth considering how that workload is divvied up even amongst the councils and with this Board.

I think this is the ninth time we've gotten a Spanish mackerel management update from the South Atlantic Council since 2019. There are some longstanding issues that need to be addressed sooner rather than later. You know kind of thinking through the timeline you just gave; we could be looking at the early 2030s before this is all finalized.

Considering that much of the Spanish mackerel fishery is a state waters fishery along most of its range, as this goes on, I think this Board and the South Atlantic Council needs to think about what items might be better addressed in an ASMFC FMP as opposed to trying to tackle all of that into a joint council FMP.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, Chris. Appreciate that. Other comments or questions on Spanish mackerel? Jason.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Just to chime in and support what Chris was just talking about. You know he and I talked a little bit about this and the arc has been long and continues on this species. I think the idea would be to maybe kind of convene a little bit and see how to piece these things out.

What might make sense for the Commission to take on and leverage their nimbleness of the Commission relative to the regional councils, just to kind of start to turn the ship here a little bit, and correct some of the issues that have been identified for a really persistent period of time here. That don't seem egregious, but just need some correction. I just wanted to support Chris, and I like the idea of trying to help supplement what is going on at the federal level with some state action as well.

CHAIR BEAL: Just as a reminder, and Emilie can fill in the blanks here. There are a number of differences between the interstate and federal fishery management plans for Spanish mackerel. I think there is a seasonal issue in the recreational side, maybe commercial as well. What happens when the quotas are landed in state waters. You know federal waters close and some states close, some step down to 500 pounds. We've got different gear types that are allowed, a couple other things. The question is, how does this Board and what is the timing of this Board's interest in proceeding on and resolving some of those differences between the state and federal FMPs. Are there things that identify through the Soth Atlantic Council that this Board might be able to help them out with.

I surely don't want to get ahead of the South Atlantic Council on this, and clearly especially in federal waters. But if there is something that the Commission can do, as Jason said, the nimbleness of the Commission to help out the South Atlantic Council maybe is a good conversation to have.

It will be interesting to hear what other folks think about that, and Christina, feel free to chime in if there is the best venue to have that conversation on what pieces of this ASMFC could tackle to help out the Soth Atlantic Council. Any thoughts around the table, then Christine, I'll go back to you and ask you if you have any thoughts. David Borden.

MR. V.D. BORDEN: I'm must kind of curious. In terms of the problems, you're noting on the regulatory side. Are these more a case of the regulations not complementing each other or not being identical?

MS. FRANKE: Not being identical, but I guess it would be up for the Board's interpretation of whether or not they think they are complementary. I'll say one example is when the quota is caught, federal water close, states are not required to close on the commercial side. Some states have voluntarily in the past decided to implement a lower trip limit, other states have not. That is sort of one of the bigger differences.

MR. BORDEN: Okay, thank you, Emilie.

CHAIR BEAL: Other thoughts. Yes, Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: I think that is probably one of the biggest issues that should be addressed at some point, at least through the ASMFC FMP is what to do when the commercial ACL is reached. I know that's an issue that SERO has raised, they have ACLs for a reason, federal waters close, but the landings keep coming in, even under lower trip limits, because that is where the fishery occurs.

Just in terms of dividing up the workload, considering this is a largely state waters fishery for the commercial fisheries, is maybe looking at trip limits, at least in the northern zone. A 3500-pound trip limit is really not constrained, and I think that kind of exacerbates some of the ACL overages that we've seen in the northern zone.

Just because it's very controversial and time consuming, we may want to consider looking at the allocation differences between the northern and southern zones for the commercial fishery. I think that's tied in with the other items that South Atlantic Council is hoping to address. You know it could draw out just that portion of the FMP pretty long. That is something that isn't really reliant on an updated stock assessment or updated FES estimates. It's just looking at whatever amount is the commercial fishery, how is that distributed along the coast from now Southern New England down to Florida.

CHAIR BEAL: Jeff, go ahead, please.

MR. RENCHEN: Yes, I understand the desire to kind of move forward on some of these items, but I also don't want to get ahead of the Council and prefer, you know there is likely to be a lot of different changes, and we prefer to kind of handle this altogether, instead of trying to get ahead and do like a couple things here and there if we could. My preference would be just to wait until the Council kind of moves forward, before we move forward. That's all I got.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, Jeff, that is good input. Not seeing any other hands around the table I'll go back to Christina. What is your perspective from Council staff?

MS. CURSTIS: I think these are really worthwhile conversations to have. I think it would certainly be beneficial to have it sort of expressed from the Commission's desire to move forward with actions related to Spanish mackerel that are not tied to the recreational catch levels in an updated stock assessment.

I'm not sure our Council is as aware of the Commission's desire to start moving forward on some of this. I think if that desire could be made clear, the Council might reconsider some of their priorities. From a staff standpoint, I think we would still want to be heavily involved in discussions related to this.

I would just sort of note, not to always bring it back to port meetings, but they are sort of a wealth of information there on some of the issues that I've been hearing you guys discuss; things like trip limits and how to slow catch in the northern zone commercially is something we talked about at length when we were with stakeholders in Virginia, as well as Maryland and New Jersey. I think that report in particular could really paint a path forward for some of these issues.

CHAIR BEAL: Thank you, Christine, that is definitely helpful. Yes, Chris.

MR. BATSAVAGE: The timing is key on this. Although myself is interested in getting things moving sooner rather than later, maybe the decision point on this Board takes on some of these items as opposed to the South Atlantic Council taking on all these items is when the stock assessment is completed and presented to the South Atlantic Council.

I think that would maybe be the point where the South Atlantic Council in conjunction with the Gulf Council is on the clock for addressing these items at the federal level. Maybe then as a Board we can discuss with those councils on what might make more sense to handle through ASMFC as opposed to indicating an action now while the stuff is underway, and we find we have a disconnect again.

I definitely want to avoid that from happening, because we've had some of those in place for a long time now. Yes, I'm just kind of putting a marker out there, as far as when we should start working on stuff. Maybe what makes the most sense is just let's see what the assessment brings and then when the South Atlantic Council is ready to start working, that's maybe where some parallel work by this Board can be done to cover some of that workload.

CHAIR BEAL: Other thoughts on that suggestion that was just, everyone hang tight until the assessment is done, then we can decide how both bodies react in a joint conversation with the Council and as Jeff said, not get ahead of the South Atlantic Council. Are folks comfortable with that timing and that strategy? Yes, David Borden.

MR. BORDEN: For my own edification, how long does it take the South Atlantic Council to do all regulations and then implement those. The real question is, what is a delay in timing between the Council finalizing its plan and the Federal Government adopting complementary regulations? How many years?

CHAIR BEAL: Christina, can you tackle that question, please?

MS. CURTIS: Absolutely. It depends on the complexity of the action and how controversial it is. I would say for simple catch level changes from the Council initiating an amendment to actual implementation of those catch levels. A fairly straightforward amendment can be anywhere from six months to a year. When we start talking about compliment changes, regional allocation changes between, for example, the northern and southern zone for Spanish mackerel, which I anticipate to be pretty controversial.

That is likely to delay the process, and that can take a year or two. That necessitates from the Council standpoint a full plan amendment, which means we have to go to both the Gulf and South Atlantic Council to get agreement, which can delay the process quite a bit. Then once the Councils have agreed and approved the amendment and transmitted it to NMFS, I don't want to speak too much on their behalf, but it can be anywhere from a couple of months to six months to longer, just depending on their workload and staffing concerns.

CHAIR BEAL: You got a thumbs up from David Borden, so that's a thank you. What are your thoughts on this? Yes, Ben Dyar.

MR. DYAR: I would just like to say that I support that wait until that assessment to have more further information and the best path forward there. If that is the joint management or wanting to do something. We'll have more information at that point. Thank you.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks. Christina, I don't think Spanish mackerel is on your agenda for your March meeting in early March. There is value in me or you reporting out this conversation sometime under reports to the Council. More than happy to do it, and just talk about the timeline. I just don't want the Council to think that the Commission is moving ahead and getting ahead of them. If there is value in that, I won't be there in person but I will be participating virtually, so happy to give that update if it's appropriate.

MS. CURTIS: Thanks, Bob, I appreciate that and we'll pass that along to sort of leadership and see if they feel like it's appropriate to include on the March agenda, because you are correct. The Mackerel Committee is not on the agenda for the foreseeable future until this stock assessment gets going.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, thanks, anything else on this for Spanish mackerel. All right, not seeing any hands around the room or online. Thanks again, Christina, for your participation.

## REVIEW AND POPULATE SPANISH MACKEREL PLAN REVIEW TEAM MEMBERSHIP

CHAIR BEAL: We'll move along to populating the Spanish Mackerel Plan Review Team. Emilie.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, so while the Board is convened, there is a couple of state updates to the representation to the Plan Review Team. For North Carolina we have Sara Pace nominated to take over the PRT for North Carolina and Chris McDonough from South Carolina. This is for the Spanish mackerel PRT. We're looking for the Board to consider approval of those nominations, and there is a draft motion.

CHAIR BEAL: Anyone, Chris Batsavage, a motion will be coming up momentarily.

MR. BATSAVAGE: **Move to approve Sara Pace of North Carolina and Chris McDonough of South Carolina to the Spanish mackerel Plan Review Team.**

CHAIR BEAL: Seconded by Ben Dyar, thank you. I don't know, Chris if you have any justification, it seems pretty straightforward. He's shaking his head that he's all set. **Any objection to adding Sara and Chris to the Plan Review Team for Spanish mackerel. Seeing none; thank you, they stand approved**.

## REVIEW AND POPULATE ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERSHIP

CHAIR BEAL: That brings us to an addition to the Advisory Panel. Tina or Emilie is going to give that presentation. Tina is up, go ahead, Tina.

MS. TINA L. BERGER: I would like to offer for the Board's consideration the addition of Robert Hale a recreational angler from Georgia to the South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel.

CHAIR BEAL: Thank you, Tina, Doug, would you like to make that motion?

MR. DOUG HAYMANS: I certainly would. **Move to approve Robert Hale of Georgia to the South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel.**

CHAIR BEAL: Is there a second to that? David Sikorski, thank you, and **any objection to adding Robert Hale to the Advisory Panel? Seeing none; he is approved** and now a member of the AP.

## ELECT VICE-CHAIR

CHAIR BEAL: That brings us to my favorite part, election of the Vice-Chair. I think Ben Dyar may have a motion.

MR. DYAR: I think the plan and the thought here is that's done when nominating someone who is not here in person to defend themselves, so with that **I have the privilege of nominating Erika Burgess as the Vice-Chair of the Coastal Pelagics Board from Florida.** Thank you.

CHAIR BEAL: Great, is there a second to that motion? David Sikorski again, thank you**. Any objection to having Erika as the Vice-Chair of this Board? Seeing none; congratulations, Erika,** wherever you may be, you are now the Vice-Chair of the Board. That's what you get for missing a meeting. Yes, you can report back that she is elected.

## ADJOURNMENT

That actually brings us to Other Business. Is there anything else before this Board that you want to tackle on the Coastal Pelagics species before we adjourn? Seeing no hands; this Board stands adjourned. Thank you all for your time today.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 11:25 p.m. on Wednesday, February 4, 2026)