

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

**Sheraton Atlantic Beach
Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
October 24, 2006**

Board Approved May 9, 2007

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Tom McCloy, NJ DFW, proxy for Mr. Chanda (AA)	Dr. Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Roy Miller, DE DFW, proxy for Mr. Emory (AA)	Robert Boyles, Jr., SC (LA)
A.C. Carpenter, PRFC (AA)	Spud Woodward, GA DNR, proxy for Ms. Shipman (AA)
Rob O'Reilly, VA MRC, proxy for Mr. Bowman (AA)	Rep. Bob Lane, GA (LA)
Catherine Davenport, VA (GA)	Luiz Barbieri, FL, proxy for Mr. McRae (AA)
Dr. Louis Daniel, NC DMF (AA)	April Price, FL (GA)
Damon Tatem, NC (GA)	Robert Mahood, SAFMC
Jimmy Johnson, NC, proxy for Rep. Wainwright (LA)	Bob Sadler, NMFS
John Frampton, SC DNR (AA)	Wilson Laney, USFWS

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

Ex-Officio Members

Rob O'Reilly, Chair, Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee
Lee Paramore, Chair, Red Drum Technical Committee
Bill Windley, Jr., Chair, Atlantic Croaker Advisory Panel

Staff

Vince O'Shea	Toni Kerns
Nichola Meserve	Bob Beal

Guests

Members of the public were present but the sign-in sheet did not reach them.

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Move to approve NJ and DE *de minimis* status for the red drum fishery and move to accept the 2006 FMP Review for Red Drum as corrected (status of the fishery). Motion by Mr. Daniel; second by Mr. Boyles. Motion carries on page 7.

Move to accept the 2006 Atlantic Croaker FMP Review. Motion by Mr. Frampton; second by Mr. Laney . Motion carries on page 9.

Move to accept the 2006 Spanish Mackerel FMP Review. Motion by Mr. Frampton; second by Mr. Rhodes. Motion carries on page 11.

Move to accept the 2006 Spot FMP review. Motion by Mr. Laney; second by Dr. Barbieri. Motion carries on page 14.

Move to accept the Spotted Seatrout FMP Review. Motion by Dr. Daniel; second by Mr. Boyles. Motion carries on page 17.

Move to accept the Red Drum Stock Enhancement Subcommittee. Motion by Dr. Daniel; second by Mr. Rhodes. Motion carries on page 28.

Move to approve Mike Potthoff to the Croaker PRT and Russ Allen and Gabe Gaddis to the Red Drum Technical Committee. Motion by Dr. Daniel; second by Mr. Boyles. Motion carries on page 29.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN SPUD WOODWARD: If I can get everybody to take their seats we'll go ahead and get our meeting started. Well, good morning, everyone. I'm Spud Woodward, chairman of the South Atlantic State/Federal Fishery Management Board.

Good morning to you all, and with "morning" being the operative word. I've already had some grumbling about this early hour, but the early bird gets the worm so we're going to go ahead and get our business taken care of.

I appreciate everybody being here. We've got plenty of room so if anybody else wants to sit at the table they're certainly welcome to do so. Some of you I can see way in the back, back there.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

But you have a draft agenda in front of you. If we have any additions to the agenda, any specific changes, I'd like to hear about them now. I know there will be one thing under other business which will be discussion about a possible fishery management plan for southern kingfish. We're going to put that under other business. It's the only change I know off.

DR. WILSON LANEY: Spud.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Yes, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman, just give me a couple minutes. I'll update everybody on the status of this upcoming year's cooperative winter tagging cruise.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: By all means, Wilson. We'll put that under other business, as well. Any other changes? Dr. Barbieri.

DR. LOUIS BARBIERI: Mr. Chairman, I just missed your comment about southern kingfish. What was that about, the other business issue?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: About possibly developing an interstate fishery management plan about southern kingfish.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any other recommended changes? Any opposition to the agenda as presented and modified? If not **we'll accept it by consensus**.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

You also have in front of you the proceedings from our last meeting. Any changes and corrections to those? If not, **we'll accept that by consensus** as well and we'll move on to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

This is the time when we allow public comment. I guess one benefit to having a meeting at 7:30 in the morning is you don't have a lot of public comment but we certainly will welcome it. If anyone is here who would like to make a comment about the business of this board, this is the time to do it. I don't see any takers so we will move on.

APPROVAL OF SEAMAP MANAGEMENT PLAN: 2006-2010

All right, at this time I want to call on Melissa Paine to discuss the SEAMAP Management Plan. This is something we discussed at our last meeting. And I think we're at the point where we're ready to take some final action. So, Melissa, I'll turn it over to you.

MS. MELISSA PAINE: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Spud said, at the August meeting in September staff presented the five-year management plan for SEAMAP to this board. And additionally, a spreadsheet was presented that laid out the putative allocations for the research programs for the South Atlantic Committee.

And this board was generally in favor of those proposed allocations. And the breakdown of those

was according to a \$5 million funding level or a \$7 million level, which will be coming down from Congress in the near future.

And so the chair of the South Atlantic Committee and I, which is Roger Pugliese, worked on integrating the numbers and the wording from that spreadsheet into that five-year plan per this board's advisement. And that's what was included in your meeting materials was that revised five-year plan. And so I'll take any questions on that now.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Melissa. There are copies of this on the front table in case anyone needs one. We can certainly discuss this. I don't know if we necessarily need to take the time to do so. I think everybody's pretty familiar with the content.

If there are not any questions I would certainly entertain a motion to approve this management plan so that we can go forward. **We have a motion to approve by Bob Mahood.** Do I have a second? We have a second by Wilson Laney. Any discussion on the motion? Any opposition to the motion? **I see no opposition so the motion carries.** We appreciate your hard work. I know it's kind of tough to be dropped in.

MR. ROBERT SADLER: Mr. Chairman, I'm abstaining from that vote.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: You'll have one abstention from the National Marine Fisheries Service. I do appreciate hard work that Melissa has done. It's kind of tough to be dropped into something like this.

It's pretty complicated. But we do appreciate it. And now we just, as the movie says, "Show us the money." So I guess we'll see. All right, moving along, I will call on Nichola Meserve to do our fishery management plan reviews.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The PRTs for the five species each completed their FMP review this year. There are

draft documents of each on the back table if you don't have them with you now.

RED DRUM FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

And we will start off with red drum which has an FMP review and the compliance reports received from the states. The FMP Amendment 2 was adopted in 2002. The primary objective of it is to achieve and maintain SPR, the spawning potential ratio, at or above 40 percent.

States implemented Amendment 2 in 2003. And this will be the third review under its guidance. There is also an ongoing process to transfer the management authority from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to the commission.

The last assessment on red drum was conducted in 2000. The escapement rate for the northern region, which is New Jersey through North Carolina, was approximately 18 percent. And the escapement rate for the Southern Region, South Carolina through Florida, was 15 percent. As such, overfishing is occurring and there is no biomass estimate. And the next assessment will be conducted in 2009 through the SEDAR process.

The fishery in 2005, the commercial fishery, coastwide landings were about 130,000 pounds. The majority, vast majority, almost 99 percent, was from North Carolina. And this is a 2.4 fold increase from 2004, which had the lowest recorded commercial landings for red drum.

The recreational fishery in 2005 harvested about 500,000 fish which is about 1.5 million pounds. Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina took about 88 percent of the catch by the number of fish, and there was approximately 2.4 million fish caught and released. And this is the second highest for the time series.

This figure just shows the commercial landings being dominated by the recreational fishery in the last 20 years that we have recording of that. And this figure has our recreational harvest and releases. The

releases is the black line on the top which is much higher than the recreational harvest.

For research and monitoring on red drum there is fishery-independent data as well as some fishery-dependent data coming from the states. Different elements of this are utilized in the stock assessment. And there is also a long line study which Spud has the opportunity to tell you some good news about in just a moment which will estimate the abundance for adult red drum.

Again, there was Amendment 2 approved in 2002 this required states to implement appropriate bag and size limits, to have a 27-inch maximum size limit, and to also maintain the current level of restrictions in the commercial fisheries.

All states have implemented the three criteria. And the states submitted their compliance reports by the due date of July 1st, 2006. Each of these reports was reviewed by the PRT and meets the FMP requirements.

Additionally, New Jersey and Delaware have requested de minimis status for 2006. As you can see by the numbers, both the states have very minimal landings and as such the PRT recommended that New Jersey and Delaware be granted de minimis.

However, the PRT feels that the states should still be required to meet the regulatory requirements and also to submit the annual compliance report. There is a further list of research and monitoring recommendations in the document. Are there any questions about this FMP review? Louis.

DR. LOUIS DANIEL: Back in one of the earlier slides it indicated that overfishing was occurring. And we've been, I've been under the impression and stated that we are no longer overfishing because the plan that we implemented that was approved by the technical committee would achieve the rebuilding requirements. And so are we overfishing or are we not overfishing? My understanding is we are not overfishing.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I think your interpretation is correct. That's what I've understood is that our escapement rates based on full implementation of Amendment 2 would put us at the point where we were not overfishing any more.

The stock was overfished still but we were not overfishing the stock. I think that's maybe where the confusion has come. The status is still overfished. We are not overfishing.

MS. MESERVE: And I'll make sure that the report in its final draft does not say that, that it has the right information.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Okay, any other questions or comments? If not, **we need a motion to approve this, including the de minimis status for the Jersey and Delaware.**

DR. DANIEL: **So moved.**

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I have a motion by Dr. Daniel. I have a second from Robert Boyles, Jr. Any opposition to the motion? If not, **the motion carries.** Thank you. I'll go ahead and talk a little bit about this long line study. It seems like I've talked about this at every meeting we've had for a long time now.

And it is with great but somber celebration that I can say we've actually crossed the bureaucratic threshold now and we have a completed biological opinion and a completed environmental assessment which is going to allow the money to flow from the commission down to the participating states in the red drum long line survey.

And this has been a long process and one that has been fraught with a lot of frustration so we finally got there. Bob, if you wouldn't mind, would you just sort of elaborate on -- not that you're the poor guy that has to explain a lot of this but elaborate a little bit on how we got from an idea to finally where we are after about 16 months or something like that.

MR. SADLER: There seem to be a lot of legal concerns about the duration of biological opinion.

And that held everything up. It took a lot of negotiation, as you know, but luckily we were able to get it signed just recently. So I think in the future consultations we won't have those problems. So hopefully I'll be able to serve as kind of a liaison to speed up the process in three years.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: And as he mentioned, the biological opinion is valid for three years, which is good. I mean we really wanted one for five years but we got one for three years which hopefully will save us from having to go through this.

You know, just to refresh everybody's memory, we had money allocated in one year but we've also got money allocated for second year so we're probably looking at being able to conduct activities related to this study well into 2008, probably. So, well, maybe even into 2009 depending on how folks stretch their dollars.

But this is important work. And I think after we get this pilot study completed and are able to focus in on exactly what we need to do and how we need to do it, then we're going to have to make some hard decisions about how do we continue this study, whether it's going to be feasible to continue to get an ACFCMA enhancement, whether we're going to have to use some of our baseline ACFCMA funding, whether we're going to have to look at SEAMAP money to put into it, or whether the states are going to be responsible for mustering up their own resources.

And I think that's coming. You know, we'll get to that point in a couple years where we'll have to have those discussions. But at least for now we're good to go and I can tell my fellows back home they can actually crank the boat up now and leave, so I know they'll be happy.

All right, any questions about the long line study? Bob, we appreciate the help. I know you and Buck did a lot of poking and prodding down in the Southeast Region and helped move it along. And I also wanted to recognize the efforts of Laura Leach and Susan Olsen up in the Northeast Office. Thanks.

You know Laura. You all know how tenacious Laura can be. And she pretty much got on this task and stayed on it and made sure that we had a final approval out of the Northeast Region office by last Friday. So, anyway, we're good to go. All right, we'll allow Nichola to continue with the FMP reviews.

ATLANTIC CROAKER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

MS. MESERVE: I'll continue with the Atlantic croaker FMP review. The FMP for Atlantic croaker was adopted in 1987 and included the states of Maryland through Florida. Amendment 1 was adopted in November 2005 and implemented January of this year.

This extended the region from New Jersey to Florida and also defined overfishing and overfished. The state compliance for this FMP review are under the original FMP, however. The latest stock assessment was completed in 2004 and peer reviewed through the SEDAR process.

This said that the Mid-Atlantic region, which is North Carolina and to the north, is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. However, the status of the South Atlantic region could not be determined due to inadequate data.

This year the TC met to do the trigger exercises which were part of Amendment 1 and Rob O'Reilly will update us on that after these presentations. The commercial fishery in 2005, I have some preliminary data from the states.

There was a total of 22.5 million pounds landed commercial, and this was dominated by North Carolina and Virginia. Recreational fishery, using the MRFSS final data in 2005, about 11.6 million fish landed. And this is about 10.6 million pounds. The majority of those came from Virginia. And there were also 13.3 million fish released alive.

Here we can see the rather cyclical landings of the commercial fishery and the increasing recreational fishery in the last 20 years. Also, the recreational

harvest and release of Atlantic croaker are shown on this slide .

Again, the assessment advice that we're using is from the 2004 stock assessments and the next assessment will be in 2009, is scheduled for 2009. Research and monitoring, we have fishery-dependent data, catch and effort from the state programs, as well as the MRFSS survey.

And there was additional fishery-dependent data from some of the states. There is fishery-independent data from many of the states as well as some of the, from NMFS and the science centers and SEAMAP.

Because this FMP is under, FMP review is under the original FMP there are no regulatory compliance requirements; however, states are going to be required to submit their first round of compliance reports next year on July 1st, 2007, under Amendment 1. I will be sure to send out a reminder about those, especially since it's the first.

The PRT recommendations are very similar to what they have been in the past, using a bycatch reduction devices, looking for a yield, an increase in the yield-per-recruit, encouraging the use of circle hooks, and there are also some research and monitoring recommendations in the document. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any questions? All right, do **I have a motion to approve the Atlantic Croaker FMP review?** A motion from Mr. Frampton. Do I have a second? Second from Wilson Laney. Any opposition to the motion? If not, the motion carries. Thank you. Nichola, carry-on.

SPANISH MACKEREL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

MS. MESERVE: I'll give Toni just a moment to catch up. I will move on to the Spanish Mackerel FMP review. The original FMP was adopted in 1990 and includes the states of New York through Florida.

The goal of this FMP is to complement the federal management in state waters to conserve the resource throughout its range and to achieve compatible

management among the states that harvest Spanish mackerel.

In 2003 the council's Mackerel Stock Assessment Panel conducted a full assessment. It estimated that F had been below FMSY and FOY since 1995 and estimated that stock abundance had increased since 1995 and was at a high at the end of this reference period and concluded that overfishing was not occurring nor was the stock overfished.

Commercial fishery, I have some preliminary 2005 data from the state agencies, again, for a total of 2.6 million pounds. This was dominated by Florida and to a lesser degree North Carolina. The recreational fishery using the MRFSS data landings in 2005 were approximately 1.1 million fish, about 1.7 million pounds.

And this has been a slight increase from the previous two years. This is dominated by Florida and North Carolina. And there were over 730,000 fish released alive in 2005. And this was, again, an increase from 2004.

Here is a graph showing the commercial and recreational harvest since 1981. And the recreational harvest and releases, harvest is the top line and the pink line is the released number. Again the assessment advice is coming from 2003 Mackerel Stock Assessment Panel.

The stock assessment, there is no new advice at this time. However, there is a SEDAR assessment planned for 2008, I believe. For research and monitoring, the service provides a great deal of the information that we use for the FMP review.

There is also an abundance index from the SEAMAP trawl survey from Cape Hatteras to Cape Canaveral. There is some state fishery-dependent data as well as the MRFSS data on the recreational fishery.

Looking to the federal measures, there was a, the TAC in 2005 was set at 7.04 million pounds. And this is allocated at a ratio of 55 to 45 between the commercial and the recreational fisheries. The stock assessment panel, however, recommended that the

absolute biological catch should be 6.7 million pounds.

So in 2006 this was taken to public comment to have a regulatory amendment that would decrease the maximum sustainable yield and also alter the trip limits to they would be consistent with the previous amendment, Amendment 15, which changed the fishing year from April to March, to March to February.

In September the council met and determined that the action would be better addressed with a plan amendment so this is still an ongoing process. For compliance requirements, each of the states with a declared interest has achieved full regulatory compliance with the plan by implementing approved bag and size limit, mesh size limits, commercial trip limits and/or seasonal closures.

In 2000 the recreational limit was also increased from 10 to 15 fish and all but two of the states bumped up the bag limit to 15. The PRT recommends that the states with the commercial fisheries north of Florida maintain the trip limits specified in the council FMP. And there is also the list of research and monitoring requirements in the document. And questions?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I'm not sure these folks are awake. Bob, to take us off on a tangent but maybe you could just briefly discuss what is going on at the council with regard to mackerel. This is sort of a complicated situation but maybe just a brief overview of what's going on and what if any implications it may have for us, which I don't know that there are any but if you wouldn't mind doing that I would appreciate it.

DR. ROBERT K. MAHOOD: Sure. Nichola is right. At the last council meeting the council determined not to move forward with the regulatory amendment -- there were some other issues involved -- and actually moved the action in to what we're calling Mackerel Amendment 18.

And anytime we do an amendment to the plan we still have to get the Gulf Council to concur with us. So we'll be taking it up at our December meeting.

From there it will then go to the Gulf Council for their concurrence and move forward next year.

We did get quite a, well, we got some public comment against it and primarily from our own advisors. So, I'm sure there will be some issues that the council will want to discuss. But it is moving ahead and expected to be completed sometime next year.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob. Louis.

DR. DANIEL: Just to follow up a little bit. It is an interesting quandary that we're, we don't know how to manage a recovered stock. And we have such a high level of biomass with Spanish mackerel that our plan that was developed to rebuild Spanish mackerel now won't allow us to take advantage of a fully recovered and actually above biomass stock.

And that's the primary reason why we had to go back; otherwise, we'd have to artificially deflate the quota when we could allow more harvest.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Well, see, there. There's a lesson in that: don't be successful. When you're successful it causes more problems. No, I think that's a good problem to have and I think it's good for us to have to wrestle with that for a change instead of the dilemma of perpetually depleted stocks.

So, any other questions or comments about the mackerel FMP review? If not I'd entertain a motion to approve that review. **I have a motion from John Frampton.** Do I have a second? From Dr. Malcolm Rhodes. Any opposition?

MR. SADLER: Abstain.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: No? **It's approved** so we'll carry on. Now to another glamorous species, spot.

SPOT FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

MS. MESERVE: Moving on to spot, the FMP was adopted in 1987, including the states Delaware through Florida. Our Policy Board adopted the finding that the FMP did not contain any management measures that states are required to implement.

There has been no coastwide abundance indices for, there are no coastwide abundance indices for spot; however, Virginia has a spot-specific survey and spot is a major component or target of several other surveys, such as the Maryland Young-of-the-year Seine Survey, a VIMS Survey, the North Carolina Pamlico Sound survey, and the Florida Indian River Lagoon Survey.

Preliminary commercial landings in 2005 are from the state agencies. The landings in 2005 were 4.4 million pounds. This is the lowest since 1969. This has been dominated by Virginia and North Carolina.

The recreational fishery using the MRFSS final data the landings in 2005 were 8.8 million fish, again dominated by North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland by number of fish. And there are also 5.9 million released alive in 2005. And this is nearly two times the 2004 number for fish released alive.

Here you can see, as I mentioned, the 2005 landings are the lowest since 1969. There is that low point just about in the middle with the black line and then the recreational fishery is in pink. Recreational harvest and releases have decreased somewhat in the last 20 years, gradually.

The assessment advice, again there is no formal stock assessment for spot. The life history information, fisheries data, have been localized and conducted on different levels of the population. And there is insufficient catch and effort data to determine the relationship between landings and abundance.

There is some fishery-dependent data coming from the state agencies as well as MRFSS and the fishery-independent data from the surveys that I mentioned previously. There is also age data out of North Carolina.

The state annually ages about 400 to 500 spot. And there has also been some work on bycatch reduction devices for spot in Virginia and North Carolina and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission.

The original FMP stated that the goals were to promote the development and use of bycatch reduction devices through demonstration and application in the trawl fisheries as well as to promote increases in the yield per recruit through delaying entry to spot fisheries to age one and older.

And there has been no activity on the FMP since so there are no compliance requirements for the FMP and states don't submit reports. The PRT recommends that an amendment to the Spot FMP be developed that has objective compliance criteria for the states, especially in light of the decreasing landings. There is also research and monitoring recommendations in the document. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Bill Windley.

MR. BILL WINDLEY: Yes, do we have anything on record in terms of effort? With the long, slow decline in the catch rate without having any effort it seems concerning.

MS. MESERVE: I'm not aware of what is available but the PRT did point out that because there is so little effort data they can't determine whether the decrease in landings is due to declining effort or not.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I knew that would get a rise out of Dr. Daniel. Go right ahead.

DR. DANIEL: No, no. I just, spot are a difficult species to deal with. And as is as indicated we age 400 or 500 year. And my inclination is to quit that. We rarely see a fish over two years old.

And I'm just wondering if, you know, if that's something that we need to spend time on. I mean by that time we were able to put any measures in place the total population would have turned over.

I mean, when you're dealing with an age structure where three is rare, I just think there should be some

discussion about that before we move forward developing any additional spot measures or spending council/commission time working on something like that unless everybody is planning to take on that responsibility and try to do a population assessment on two-year old fish.

And I don't really see where the benefit is. I mean many of the restrictions that we've put in place have been geared toward protecting spot, and croaker, weakfish, and those types of things.

And I think we've been mostly successful there. And so I would rather spend our time doing something else like maybe southern kingfish that we'll talk about later than working on spot. But I'd be curious to hear what the board's opinion on that was.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Louis. Anybody else have any? Rob.

MR. ROB O'REILLY: Yes, I think there are some things to look at. There was a question of effort. And certainly Virginia and North Carolina have effort data from the trip ticket programs. It would be a situation to, you know, try and get the best out of that effort data.

It is not as good as the, you know, the pounds harvested, for example. But it is there in the case of North Carolina from 1994 on, and Virginia as well from '93 on. So that should be looked at first.

The other thing is the poundnet fishery in Virginia at least has been in decline. The 2003 storm, Isabelle, certainly knocked out a lot of stands and in addition some of the National Marine Fishery Service rules relating to sea turtle conservation, that also, you know, affected the poundnet industry.

And that's certainly one of the major gears for spot. So, I think probably all the data has to be looked at first. I don't know whether that takes some type of a formal meeting or whether that can be done through coordination back to the states to start pulling data together.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Rob, for those comments. Anyone else on the board have any comments about the situation with spot? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Well, to Rob's comments, Mr. Chairman. Sounds to me like that's something the board could charge the technical committee to undertake if the board wishes to do so. And just for the record, it seems to me at least in North Carolina spot is an extremely popular species for shore fishermen.

And pier fishermen, especially in my experience, some of them maybe subsistence fishermen. I wonder, you know, how well their points of view get represented in this forum sometimes because they don't tend to attend board meetings.

And especially since there has been no management action on spot we may not be hearing from them. I think Bill raised a good point, that if you just look at the data in the absence of correcting it for effort, there does appear to be some sort of a long, slow decline.

So I think maybe some sort of a directive to the technical committee to do what Rob just suggested would be appropriate and then bring that information back to the board and we could consider it further.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right. Well, I like it when the board gives the chairman some clear direction. And this one is going to be pretty easy because we don't have a standing Spot Technical Committee.

So you've got to put the cart behind the horse and right now we don't have a horse so I think what we can do, with the concurrence of the board, is that I will ask Nichola to go back to our respective states and see if we can't populate a Spot Technical Committee.

I'm sure that will be a highly sought-after position, a big resume builder there. But in all seriousness it is, we can approach it that way if that's in agreement with everybody. A.C.

MR. A.C. CARPENTER: If you're just going to check CPUEs on commercial landings do you really need a technical committee to -- can't each state just submit their own data and the staff put together a table to present at the next meeting? It doesn't sound like it's a full technical committee evaluation that we're after here.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Well, I'm kind of hearing I guess two sort of different points of view. I've got, you know, some folks that think that maybe this needs to be little more closely examined and some folks are saying, well, you know, let's not divert our resources, limited resources to do that.

I know that we face this conundrum of, you know, how do we maintain levels of activity. And if you all will remember I think it was two or three meetings ago that we brought all of our plans out on the table and, you know, had a discussion about do we actually contemplate discontinuing some of these FMPs just because they're sort of there on paper but we really don't do anything with them.

And it was the will of the board at the time to continue the status quo. I think it probably looks a little strange sometimes to our constituencies when we have FMPs but we really don't do anything with them nor do we have a committee structure or anything to deal with them.

So I will certainly defer to the will of the board. My personal opinion is that maybe we ought to try to, you know, put together a Spot Technical Committee and at least activate them for a year and let them take a little closer look at this.

And it will be, obviously, up to the respective states to involve themselves in this as best I can, you know, with their limited human resources. But that's just my opinion.

And I think we can do this first cut of data maybe without a technical committee. But then what do we do with that after we get it? You know, somebody really needs to take a look at that. Dr. Daniel.

DR. DANIEL: Just looking at the makeup of plan review team that probably would suffice, I think, to do what A.C. is suggesting. And we don't want to make it sound like it's not an important fishery, it's just the question is what you do about it, you know, with its short life-span and its importance in the bait component in Virginia and North Carolina, particularly, how to address those issues.

I mean, you open up a lot of cans of worms that I'm not sure we want to get into right now unless we see a problem with this information that has been suggested that we compile.

So I think certainly John Schoolfield from North Carolina is our lead biologist on spot who does all the aging. And the other folks I think would probably help if Herb is still at VIMS, I thought he had retired. So we might need a new VIMS person or Virginia person.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I'd like to hear from some of the other folks, maybe Florida or some of the other states that have an interest in this as to whether there is a strong feeling one way or the other, South Carolina. Wilson.

DR. LANEY: I don't have any problem with A.C. and Louis' suggestion. I was under the perception we had a technical committee but their suggestion is certainly viable. Herb did in fact retire so we'd have to find someone else from VIMS unless he was willing to serve in that capacity.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right, Dr. Barbieri.

DR. BARBIERI: Mr. Chairman, our catches of spot are so relatively small that you know with the exception of our independent survey inshore we don't really have a significant catch of -- don't have a real strong opinion one way or the other about that species.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right. Well, just to sort of bring this to closure, why don't we proceed with A.C.'S recommendation and use our PRT as sort

of a sounding board perhaps and then we'll look at this at a future meeting.

And I just would ask all of you to, you know, when you get back home to try to help support this and we'll avoid a formal technical committee process for the time being until we see that we need to do so.

Any other comments or questions about the Spot FMP review? Do I have a motion to approve the review? **I have a motion from Dr. Laney.** A second? A second from Dr. Barbieri. Any opposition? **With no opposition we'll consider that FMP review approved.** And, Nichola, we can move on.

SPOTTED SEATROUT FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

MS. MESERVE: Continuing with the Spotted Seatrout FMP which is our last. The FMP for spotted seatrout was adopted in 1984 and included the states Maryland through Florida. Amendment 1 was approved in 1991 and the goal was to maintain 20 percent spawning potential ratio for the stock.

There has been no coastwide assessment of spotted seatrout. There are local age structure analyses from Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, however. A 2001 Florida report estimated SPR at 57 percent in the Northeast and 32 percent in the Southeast coast of the state.

A Georgia report from 2002 estimated that SPR was below 20 percent; however, deficiencies and changing methodology make this result unreliable. And there was also an ongoing report from South Carolina.

It's preliminary but it estimates a 15 to 18 percent SPR and suggested that the 20 percent goal is inadequate to maintain a sufficient population. The last two reports, however, do have data problems and are preliminary.

The commercial fishery, preliminary landings from the states indicated 187,000 pounds were commercially landed. This is an increase from 2004,

however it's the third lowest in the time series going from 1960 to the present. This has been dominated by North Carolina and Florida in 2005.

The recreational fishery, we have some MRFSS data. The landings in 2005 were about 1.4 million fish or 1.9 million pounds. And this is a slight increase from the previous four years. North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina and Georgia harvest about 97 percent of the total number of recreationally harvested fish by number of fish.

And there were about 5.5 million fish released alive in 2005 and this is a 60 percent increase from 2004. Here we can see the commercial landings and the recreational landings in pink as well as the recreational harvest and releases. In 1994 the recreational releases began to be more than the recreational harvest.

Again, there has been no formal stock assessment of spotted seatrout. And we can use the Florida, South Carolina and Georgia age structure analyses to get some indication of the stock. There are data shortages, however, that reduce the reliability of some of these assessments.

The same states as well as North Carolina have various research and monitoring programs in their states for spotted seatrout.

All states with a declared interested in spotted seatrout have established a minimum size limit of at least 12 inches total length. And many states have implemented bag and size limits that are more conservative than what Amendment 1 requires. So there are no compliance issues was spotted seatrout.

The PRT recommends that an amendment be developed that has objective compliance criteria and that the collection of commercial and recreational landings data continue with emphasis on effort data.

There should also be developed, there should also be methodologies developed to monitor stock status. And there is a list of research and monitoring requirements in the document. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any questions? This is sort of another one of those difficult species to manage from an interstate standpoint given what we know about their behavior and distribution. And I think we've always struggled with this one, as well. Rob.

MR. O'REILLY: I guess that's the second time I saw "objective compliance review" and especially with spotted seatrout is there some idea of what that might entail given the lack of an assessment? Any discussion on that?

MS. MESERVE: Well, there are no compliance requirements in the original FMP so you're asking what --

MR. O'REILLY: What might develop as a compliance requirement.

MS. MESERVE: In other FMPs these are monitoring requirements or regulatory requirements. I'd have to talk to the PRT to get a better idea.

MR. O'REILLY: I just wondered if there had been some discussion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Dr. Daniel.

DR. DANIEL: Yes, I guess the issue we've always discussed, and the last time we talked about this was with, I think Susan Shipman was with us, and we were talking about the difficulties in managing speckled trout outside of the state jurisdictions just because they are, tend to be state-specific and the tagging data suggests that they don't move around a whole lot from state-to-state.

So really I would question its inter-jurisdictional nature in the first place. I think it's still good to have this plan in place just to protect it because there is some interchange, I think, certainly between Virginia and North Carolina.

But just for your information we are in the process of developing a Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan in North Carolina. It's slated to begin in June of '07. And we'll have a, hopefully, a quantitative peer

reviewed stock assessment completed by that time which we can provide to the technical committee and the commission.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Dr. Daniel. Dr. Barbieri, a comment.

DR. BARBIERI: I hate to do this but I have to agree with my distinguished friend from North Carolina and question the inter-jurisdictional nature of spotted seatrout management. I'm not sure that that is something that is legitimate.

Just to have an example, in Florida we actually conduct four separate regional stock assessments for spotted seatrout because of genetic differences in groups coastwide. I'm not sure that, you know, coastwide stock assessment for the Atlantic stock of spotted seatrout is even scientifically valid.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right, thank you, Luiz. Perhaps the best thing to do is maybe get with the PRT and, you know, get a little more information on what they mean by "objective compliance criteria."

And maybe we can discuss that in the future. But my sense is that nobody's ready for any radical departure from the status quo - keep the plan in place, encourage states to do the work that they're doing, and bring that work to the board when it's relevant and apply it to our discussions.

So, any other further questions? I have one from the audience. I will certainly entertain that if you will approach a microphone Mr. Brame and identify yourself, please.

MR. DICK BRAME: I'm Dick Brame with the Coastal Conservation Association. Our concern with this since speckled trout and red drum form, you know, the premiere inshore species recreationally is the 20 percent SPR for this species. It seems to me at least with a recreational species that your abundance is what is key.

You know, the value of the fish is in the water and expectation is what you really manage for. So I think

the least you may consider is raising the SPR and the compliance criteria to 30 percent or perhaps even 40 because we believe it's, managing for abundance in this species is the way to go.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Mr. Brame. Any comments or responses to Mr. Brame's commentary? Again, I think we have a situation where I'm not sure we have a standing Spotted Seatrout Technical Committee to respond to that and to advise us and perhaps that's something that we may need to do.

I certainly think that one ranks a little bit higher than spot on our radar screen. But, again, you know, we have to question the role of this body to guide the states in terms of how they manage their spotted seatrout stocks. But it's certainly something we can consider. Dr. Daniel.

DR. DANIEL: The South Carolina analysis supported what Mr. Brame indicated as far as managing the stock for a higher level of SPR. I don't believe we have an ACFCMA-compliant FMP for spotted seatrout which is one of the things that we, one of the justifications we used to move forward with the croaker update.

So we may want to have a set-aside discussion at our next meeting, Mr. Chairman, to discuss the direction that we want to take with spotted seatrout. I mean, I certainly agree with my friend from Florida, the inter-jurisdiction nature is questionable and the validity of doing an assessment is probably not there.

But, you know, how do you manage individual state populations through an ASMFC plan? And I'm not sure we've done that before. And so it would be an interesting discussion to see how we might move forward and have the coastwide, statewide assessments managed under an ASMFC plan.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you for those comments, Louis. Dr. Laney.

DR. LANEY: The comments by Louis and Luiz are both well-taken with regard to the inter-jurisdiction nature of spotted seatrout but with regard to, you

know, whether or not ASMFC manages a species that require management more at watershed level, you know, they're already doing that for American shad and are no doubt going to be doing it for river herring at some point in the future.

So that, you know, that precedent exists in terms of you know states making the decision to do individual assessments. I think that's a state call. But certainly that can be done under the umbrella of an ASMFC plan even though you don't have the kind of inter-jurisdictional exchange that you do with American shad, you know, a species that spends much of its life at sea. So that precedent does exist.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Wilson. We can certainly come forward at the next meeting with a little more detailed discussion about this, maybe some pros and cons and some suggested strategies.

I just confirmed with Nichola that we do not have a standing Spotted Seatrout Technical Committee so obviously we've got to take one step at a time.

So perhaps that's something we can work on before our next meeting is, you know if it's the will of this board to engage in a discussion about a course of action on spotted seatrout we can come up with a list of membership for our Spotted Seatrout Technical Committee as a start in the discussions. So, A.C.

MR. CARPENTER: Is there any monetary support for the committee that the commission has set aside? Or is that something that we need to get through the budget process to even -- you know, can we afford a technical committee?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Well, that's certainly something that we're going to have to discuss. When we talk about taking, you know, sort of resurrecting a committee who hasn't been active for a while there is always budget implications.

And I think the question would be you know how active would this group be and what would be the timeline of that? And I think that's something that we would be looking at.

Let's assume we don't have a meeting until next May then, you know, any proposed action would be probably the latter part of 2007, the early part of 2008 with regard to committee meetings. So, Vince, have you got any comment on that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN V. O'SHEA: Yes, thanks, Mr. Chairman. We're doing our action plan workshop this morning. And in preparation for that I don't recall us putting this project or any discussion on this.

So maybe the way to start it would be in the report of the South Atlantic Board to the Policy Board on Thursday might be a recommendation to initiate looking into that and consider putting it on the action plan for next year, putting a placeholder in.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Again, I don't think there is an overwhelming sense of urgency here. I think there is just, you know, the desire to start making some measurable progress. Louis.

DR. DANIEL: Yes, I mean I know the majority of the plan review team members and I would assume that they would be technical committee members. I would be very curious with the people on here, Gabe and Beth Burns and Mike Murphy and Charlie Wenner, to get their opinion on how to move forward.

I mean I don't think it would be out of line to provide them with this discussion that we've had and ask their opinion in light of what we've discussed around the table, particularly with the inter-jurisdictional nature and how they would recommend that we move forward. I would be very curious to hear from this group.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Yes, I think this can be done without a heavy financial burden, probably done in a more informal manner. And then if we decide we need more formal action we can get that integrated into the action plan for the future where, you know, we need some commission support for meetings and that sort of thing.

Any other questions and comments about the Spotted Seatrout FMP review? If not do I have a motion to approve the review as submitted? **I have a motion to approve from Dr. Daniel.** Do I have a second? A second from Robert Boyles. Any opposition to the motion? If not, **the motion carries.**

Nichola, thank you very much. I think that concludes our FMP reviews. Appreciate the work of the PRT members and certainly you in coordinating all of this. With that we'll move on to our next agenda item which is the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee update from Rob O'Reilly.

ATLANTIC CROAKER TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And what I'm going to provide to you is really the first time the technical committee went through the process of looking at triggers. Triggers were designed to perhaps be a reason or a basis for us to look towards a stock assessment.

These triggers that I'm going to show you aren't related to direct management action, rather it's related to the stock assessment. So do you want me to push this? Is that the idea?? I have to be ambidextrous. Okay.

So, your first challenge I guess would be to look at the charges. This is in Amendment 1. And trust me, I'm going to show these all individually but I wanted to give you the full scope of what is in the amendment as far as triggers are concerned.

And Number 1 in particular, the relative percent change in landings, that's what the technical committee and you have been informed would be the hard trigger at this time; into the words, that if the commercial landings are less than 70 percent of the previous year's, two year's landings, then that would fire the trigger; the same thing with the recreational fishery.

So to look at that more closely, it's really just the relative percent change in landings. And as I indicated, the stock assessment would be triggered if

the most recent year's, and in this case 2005, commercial landings were less than 70 percent of the average of 2004 and 2003. The same situation holds for the recreational.

This may be a little bit out of focus. I'm not sure. But what it shows is the commercial landings in 2005 were 22.5 million pounds. The recreational landings -- and this is for the Mid-Atlantic area so this is including North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey -- the average for 2003-2004 commercial landings was 26.9 million pounds for recreational.

That was 8.7 million pounds. And to the right you can see the percent difference. The landings went down in 2005 by 16 percent compared to the previous two years. On the recreational sector the landings increased by 13 percent, certainly not a trigger situation.

At the bottom we wanted to include this on the technical committee because the work had started earlier before we had final 2005 data but if you look at the bottom frame you can see that the landings were a little bit higher; just looking at 2004, 25 million pounds.

The recreational were a little bit lower than in 2005 at 8.5 million pounds. And if you look to the right you can see that the differences were both a downturn of almost 7 percent commercial and 6 percent recreational.

One aspect of showing you two time stanzas is to show you there is a little bit of variation year-to-year. And the technical committee sees this as a, related to a number of factors. Especially for 2005 you have situations with the fleet, with fuel.

In addition you have a year-class affect. The 1998 year class in particular had moved through the fisheries more by 2005 than 2004. And there are other factors that just are related to the operation of fisheries so you're going to see some variability, inner-annual.

This is to look at the commercial and recreational harvest from the South Atlantic. There's no formal stock assessment for the South Atlantic. But the technical committee did want to show this comparative information.

The South Atlantic includes South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida. And when you look at the information, 2005 commercial compared to 2004 had increased by about 5,000 pounds. On the recreational side there was a decrease from 2005, 194,000 pounds compared to 249,000 pounds in 2004.

If you move to the percent difference you can see that if the same rule were in effect for a trigger for the South Atlantic, which it is not because of the lack of a stock assessment, the differences are still within the less than 70 -- more than 70 percent as far as the differences.

So you wouldn't have a trigger. Once we have information that we can move towards the stock assessment, you know this will become more critical to take a look at.

The second charge in the amendment for the technical committee was to provide you with information on biological data monitoring. And one way is to look at recent length data, mean length data from the recreational fishery to the average of the previous two years.

And this slide shows just that. And you can see that to the left this is a Mid-Atlantic component, same states involved. In 2005 10.6 million fish. And the weighted mean length was 309 millimeters.

And you can see that that's actually an increase when you look in terms of inches the differences from going from a previous value of 12.06 in '03, 11.9 in '04, up to 12.2 in 2005 and that's positive.

You know, we are looking for some signs perhaps of juvenescence when we do this as a rough measure and so this information bears out that at least in the Mid-Atlantic there are no indications.

In the South Atlantic there is a similar increase in the mean size, much less fish, 1.3 million fish compared to 10.6 million fish from the landings in the Mid-Atlantic. And the mean length to the right there, 9.6 inches in 2005, which is up from the previous two years.

There is also a component of the biological data monitoring where the technical committee will look it overall age composition or proportions at age and calculate the mean size at age for age groups that are present in the state samples.

So, again, these triggers are not hard triggers but, nonetheless, the conversations from the technical committee and the information that was related to you previously was even if the landings don't cause a trigger to be fired there can still be information in the other suite of data that the technical committee could say to you we do need to go forward with the stock assessment.

This shows age composition of Virginia commercial harvest. And I think in general I found it difficult to really get clear trends out of the Virginia data and really out of the state data other than to notice you do want to see that there is a good abundance of older fish, age 6 up.

You know, you also want to look at some of the strong year classes which you will see. So perhaps by 2005 age four, you know that may be something that will follow through in the fisheries.

Similarly, with age two, even though age 2 is considered fully recruited I think in some cases, depending on the gear, it probably isn't fully recruited. So it would be tough to make a lot of comparisons.

But you can in a small way take a year class and follow it through but not always successfully. For example, if you look at the age 5, 2003, and follow that through to age 6 you see the numbers go from about 2.8 million to about 1.3 million.

And then if you follow ie to age 7 you're down to 1.7 million. So is here some aging overlap, you know,

what exactly is causing the lack of a you know perfect follow through there. You know, I think that's some the technical committee can keep discussing.

Maryland, less in terms of the overall pounds are shown here for Maryland. But, again, you're seeing some trends where you are seeing fish that are, since there is less abundance overall you're missing some of the older age class.

But I think the good thing to look at is by 2005 your 6, 7, and 8s, you know, you're still seeing fish there. And, too, not as strong in 2005 in Maryland as in Virginia but yes in 2003 and 2004.

This may cause a little vertigo but I think what I was trying to do here is overlay the length-at-age. And the technical committee actually recommended that these be isolated by year rather than put together as one single composite.

So 2003 is in the dark color. It's green, really; 2004, in red; 2005, in yellow. And I think you see the trends you would want to see with the increase in size at age. It's debatable in terms of, you know, whether or not there is some differences in aging there in my mind.

And I have asked Old Dominion University about this for the fact that you see the 2004 year class. You do see some differences throughout, both for the gillnet fishery, in the upper left poundnet, and in the haul seine. So slightly larger sizes at age for the 2004 data.

Maryland, you see the same increasing trend if you get far to the right to the Age 12. That's just a matter of sample size, really. But I think what you're seeing, there is you know pretty homogeneous distribution of sizes at age. One thing is that seem to be a little larger than the Virginia fish at particular ages once you get past Age 1.

North Carolina, same distribution of increase with age and somewhat intermediate I saw in terms of having a more close relationship to the Virginia size-at-age but not quite, but not extended to the Maryland

size either. So the size is more generally parallel with Virginia sizes at age.

Mean weight was another component to look at. And these are the Virginia mean weights at age. And not a whole lot to say there except for what is going on with Age 2 in 2004, again, could be just a data question.

Maryland -- and I don't know whether you can read off any of that but I also can tell you that it, to give you an example, will take Age 5, in general 7/10th of a pound for Age 5 from the Virginia data. If you go to Age 5 for Maryland it's closer to one pound so there are differences in size. If you go to North Carolina, it's also about one pound.

You know one of the discussion items on the Croaker Technical Committee over time has been the aging conventions. And Virginia does have a little bit different methodology taken after Luiz, I guess with his work at VIMS.

But the first annulus is counted regardless of whether it's clear. There is a first annulus that is taken into account. That has some differences to South Carolina and North Carolina. But at the same time the last time that I asked the technical committee in the recent meeting it almost seemed that it wasn't a big issue.

I think the recommendations were you just subtract one year for the Virginia data. And in some cases looking at this data that would align things better. But I don't think it solves the issue on the appropriate aging methodology.

I would guess about a year ago I mentioned that many species committees have asked for perhaps an aging workshop. I bring that up again. Maybe there needs to be a combine of aging workshops and really make the most of one setting and an overlap of a lot of the same people in the aging process. But in my mind the aging conventions still aren't absolutely clear.

Effort versus landings, one thing that the technical committee said early-on in this process of working on

triggers, and it's also in the amendment, is that were it the best of days then we would prefer to provide you with catch-per-unit-effort relationships rather than just a landings-based hard trigger.

You know, we feel that that should be based on the catch-per-unit effort. The unfortunate situation right now is that that data is not quite to a state where there is a lot of confidence to bring it forward.

I can talk just roughly about the Virginia situation. In any one year we have hundreds of thousands of records from the fishermen that report on a daily basis and all those involved with croaker.

There's a pretty extensive group of fisherman, extensive group of gears, and there is just a lot of records. And you need to go through those records because the reporting in Virginia which started in 1993 certainly has reliability in terms of reporting in pounds.

Accuracy, you can question accuracy all day long but reliability, there is certainly a reliable way of reporting pounds. Effort is a more difficult to get the right reporting. And despite infrequent outreach efforts and lots of phone calls to correct forms, I know there are still errors.

I mean I have looked at the data, not for croaker recently but for blue crab. And you will see things that just, they really don't make sense. Well, you have to go in and you have to parse those out, create a subprogram and then go from there. So that work needs to be done.

Virginia is continuing to try to do that. I'm sure North Carolina is since those would be the two big components for the commercial fishery. And at some day I hope to have that information for you or at least my successor will have that information for you.

So we looked at trips or days fished, catch per trip, very gross level of CPUE. And another technical committee recommendation, there were hoping that you would be able to better follow the trends here if the three stanzas or the three gears here -- anchor gillnet on top, haul seine and poundnet -- if they were

separated you might be able to see better what was occurring with those fisheries.

And I think overall my summary is that things are tracking fairly well. The trips which are over on your right-hand side of your graph and are in the yellow line compared to the pounds landed by gear in the solid bars, the behavior is pretty well.

There is good tracking there. It's not perfect, but in general there is very good tracking that you are getting better landings with more effort.

This shows the average pounds per trip for major commercial fisheries in Virginia. The three gears are at the bottom. Those are the major gears. And I think what you can see first of all is the haul seine.

That's a lot of fish per trip you might be thinking but, you know, keep in mind there are several things about the haul seine fishery. It has a short time span in terms of its operation, a few months.

It has only, despite about a constancy of 33 to 35 licensees, it probably only has 10 to 12 harvesters who participate. And, you know, they're able to have larger haul by virtue of the gear.

But if you look at the blue segment going across in the middle there for the poundnet you can see that, you know, generally nothing to give an indication of abundance trends to worry about, pretty static, really, from 2001 to 2005. The mean is probably around 1,300 pounds.

The gillnet, I don't think I can even read the numbers here on the bottom, but the same kind of trend. I think that the last two years do look to me like about 321 pounds in 2004; 373 pounds in 2005.

You have to dig deeper than this, though. You would have to get to some of the CPUE statistics. And that will take going through the data meticulously.

North Carolina gillnet catch-per-unit effort, you can see an increasing trend in general starting with it looks like 1999 up is an increasing trend. There had been some high values earlier. If you look at the haul

seine, sort of a pattern without any great trend over time from 1994.

The fly net, a slight increasing trend, again, 1998. And 1999 again in this question like gillnet and for the trawl similarly an increasing trend overall. And, again, I think 1996 was the year that you know really an abundance of croaker were seen.

And it's been a pretty good run since then. This is the combined gear types for North Carolina. Increasing trend. And here really it shows up as 1998. So that's the input of the haul seine.

For the South Atlantic/Florida commercial gillnet landings, you can see the trend when the recreational -- excuse me, when the regulations were put in place you can see the immediate drop off. And that sort of continues. If you look at gillnet CPUE you're looking at a very small scale, you know, maybe 10 to 12 pounds the last five years.

Commercial hook and line, somewhere around 2,000 pounds maybe a little bit less in 2005, probably 600 or 700. And the important thing is that the trips decrease is coupled with the landings decrease as well. And vice versa from the earlier years.

Just a hook and line CPUE at the bottom and it does show a decreasing trend overall, the last five years. The cast net landings and trip, apparently in Florida cast net means something different than what I'm used to.

But I found out that they are larger mesh. I couldn't quite figure out why the pounds were as large as they were. You know cast net in Virginia might be something you got after some minnows or some bait for fishing. That's apparently not the case in Florida. Overall you do see a pretty good tracking of the effort in trips and the landings.

The CPUE, really not, varying without a trend from 1998 or so I would say. The technical committee will continue to derive a MRFSS CPUE on a directed trip basis to examine state-by-state the catch rates on an annual basis with lots of question marks.

And this is, the question marks probably come from all the times I talked to technical committee members and said, first of all, "Who is going to do this"; second of all, "Should we do this"; and, third of all, "Should we do something else."

And I think the answer to the first two is probably not and the last question is we probably should do something else. This is a very complex situation that Janaka de Silva when he was with the committee put together.

It involves sort of what I think of as a "nearest neighbor" approach. It looks at the composite of species that are taken on trips and produces a probability index for weakfish and then expands that.

And it took a lot of work for Janaka to get that finished. And I think in general we don't have anyone right now on the committee who had the time to go through that. But, more importantly, I know that I spoke with Eric Williams from National Marine Fisheries Service and he indicated there might be a few other approaches or methods that can be used to satisfy this criteria, this softer trigger.

And I think in general everyone does agree it's good to have something for the recreational side, beyond the mean length and the beyond the landings. So if you don't mind we'll have to keep you posted on how this develops.

But for right now there is no update from what Janaka did through 2002. The technical committee will continue to monitor the surveys and compare these estimates to the long-term averages.

This shows the NMFS Fall Survey. And you can see that there is an upward trend. There is also a great deal of variation around those mean estimates, especially in the last six years or so. But nonetheless the mean is an upward trend.

You have kilograms per tow on the Y axis and, you know, probably a slight drop-off in a couple of places; 2001 and built up again; 2005, it dropped off. The other three years are hovering around 80 to 100 kilograms per tow.

And it is always ironic to me to look at this because this survey did have a good fit in the assessment. And if you're familiar with weakfish there has been quite a lot of disclaimer put on the NMFS survey being able to track weakfish appropriately.

And there are differences in the strategies of the two fish which could make sense why croaker has a better fit to the NMFS survey in terms of an abundance index. The Fall Survey just showing the year and the percent of tows with Atlantic croaker, so quite high.

You know, once you get beyond, you know it probably looks like 1995 so 1996 was the year when things really were quite abundant for croaker. And that shows up in the data. You had over 70 percent of the tows from NMFS. And that sort of varies without trend right on through 2005 at a high level.

This provides the relationship of the mean catch and on a Y axis the percent of the tows that were positive for croaker in the various survey strata. And I can think overall if you just look at a trend line, you know definitely as you come out with the means as they're higher there is both variability in which tows were positive and which weren't.

If you are interested, each data point I took the time to plot out which year it was. And I know that that would be something if you have interest I can tell you about that.

This is something Nichola and I had fun with. But it's right now and it shows the recent years, the SEAMAP survey abundance indices both for SEAMAP North, which is used directly in the assessment for the Mid-Atlantic, the New Jersey to North Carolina component.

You can see the trend is one of an increase; 2004, about 52 kilograms per tow; 2005, almost 49 kilograms per ton. For SEAMAP south, South Carolina/Florida, you can also see that there was a trend where it was rising up to 2004.

You see a drop-off back to about the 2002 level in 2005 down to 3.6 kilograms per tow. If you take it as

a composite, the overall trend has increased, not as high in 2005 as in 2004 because the effect of the SEAMAP south.

So I think in general the indices that we're using that were used in the assessment so far give pretty promising indication for croaker and, you know, do help us with our trigger analysis.

The VIMS is really something that the SEDAR made the recommendation to include the VIMS survey. It is localized. But nonetheless it does have a long time series. The time series extends even further back in time.

I think if you look at about maybe 2001 to 2005, generally there is a trend there. It's low but certainly there are other years as you go back in time which are lower or as low. And the peak values that were a part of the, you know, the '83 to say '93 period where you had some pretty strong year crosses, young of year, we haven't quite seen that in a little while.

This is the spring survey so it is aligned that way by the technical committee to avoid any problems of the fall that you might see before any type of a winter die-off. And that's my report. I'm happy to take questions.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you for that very comprehensive report Rob. It's pretty evident that you have invested a lot of time and effort. And we appreciate your leadership of the Croaker Technical Committee. Anybody have any questions about Rob's report or comments? I think you overwhelmed them with your completeness. Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Rob, I think I heard that there was a new world record croaker caught in Virginia, somewhere around 6.5 pounds, 6-3/4, something like that, and that you all did manage to obtain the otoliths. And I was wondering if you have aged those yet.

MR. O'REILLY: I haven't heard. You're ahead of me. I didn't hear of that catch. I know I didn't make it. But I will check on that for you. Do you know whether it was a locality? Did you hear that?

DR. LANEY: No, I didn't hear the locality. I just heard there was a new world-record croaker.

MR. O'REILLY: It was a six and --

DR. LANEY: Six-and-a-half or six-and-three-quarters.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay.

DR. LANEY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thanks. I think Howard, are you going to shed some light on that?

MR. HOWARD KING: That catch was in Maryland. It has not been aged yet.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Is that weight accurate?

MR. KING: Yes. It might be off by an ounce but that's about it.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: It might be a red drum/croaker hybrid; you never know. Strange things happen sometimes. So, thank you very much, Rob, for that what report.

MR. O'REILLY: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Is everybody comfortable with how we're moving forward with the croaker plan? I think it's pretty obvious that it's going to take some constant work of the technical committee to keep as vigilant about croaker.

But if everybody is comfortable with our approach then we'll move forward and we'll call on Lee Paramore to give us a report from the Red Drum Technical Committee.

RED DRUM TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

MR. LEE PARAMORE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Red Drum Technical Committee

met in August in Raleigh. We've had a little bit of a break. It's been almost four years since the technical committee has met.

The primary purpose of this meeting was to begin looking ahead at the 2009 stock assessment for red drum. Since it's been such a long time since we've met, I thought it would be good to give just a little bit of background.

Some of this may be a little bit redundant with the FMP review so bear with me a little bit. But the previous assessment was conducted in 2000. It included data through 1998. It uses a virtual population analysis; more specifically, it was the FADAPT model.

One thing to keep in mind with red drum is we're not looking at spawning stock biomass because the data is inadequate to determine that. So we're working with SPR values. And the goal of Amendment 2 is to obtain an SPR value of 40 percent.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the regions along the Atlantic Coast, it's not a coastwide assessment. It's actually broken down into two regions with North Carolina north being one region and South Carolina south being another region.

Some of the major data inputs that went into the last stock assessment and will most likely be the major inputs for the upcoming stock assessment include both recreational landings and effort data from the MRFSS survey.

For the north region we had commercial landings primarily from North Carolina but also some from Virginia. North Carolina provides a juvenile index that's used as a tuning index for the model.

And also Virginia and North Carolina provide age data. In the south region we have the recreational landings and effort data. South Carolina provides a sub-adult trammel net survey which is used as a tuning index. And Florida provides a juvenile survey. And all the states in the south region provide aging data.

As I said, the goal of Amendment 2 is to achieve the 40 percent SPR. There has really been three distinct management periods for red drum that have been assessed. The first period, the period of 1987 to 1991, this was really prior to any major management action.

And you can see the SPR values for both the north and the south region were very low, around 1 percent. Amendment 1, the goal of Amendment 1 was an interim goal to attain at least a 10 percent SPR. And that was the period of 1992 to '98.

And you can see according to the most recent stock assessment we were successful in achieving that 10 percent goal with the north region achieving 18 percent SPR and the south region at 15 percent.

Amendment 2 required -- let me make sure. Amendment 2 requires that states take management action that would achieve the 40 percent SPR. And states were given options on bag limits and stop limits that they could implement to achieve this 40 percent. And this is based on bag and size limit analysis that was done by Doug Vaughn.

And you can see for the north region Virginia went with an 18 to 26 inch slot limit and North Carolina went with 18 to 27 inches. The reason that I put this up is because you can see the variability between states. Some states chose very different options.

And this does create an obstacle in the upcoming stock assessment because with the different size limits it's going to create some problems with selectivity and some other issues with the stock assessment so it's something to keep in mind as we move forward.

And there actually may be some needs to look at some individual state stock assessments as opposed to, as well as the regional stock assessments to see what this effect is going to have on the results.

Some of the major data needs moving forward for the red drum assessment, we still have no information on the adult fish. As you know, we proposed to do a red

drum long line study which after that we'd be moving forward in what's left of this year and next year.

But that is a long-term need, requiring many years of data before that can actually be used as part of the stock assessment. One of the major issues in the upcoming stock assessment is going to be the lack of data on the recreational releases.

We have estimates of the numbers of releases but we have no idea what the length frequencies of those releases are. The reason this is important is, as you saw in the previous slide, as states have decreased their bag limits the number of releases have gone up dramatically.

And when you apply the 10 percent mortality that is used to releases in the stock assessment the actual number of releases in a given year can actually exceed the number fish harvested. So what we assume about the size of these releases is very important to the outcome of stock assessments.

So we really need good information on the releases of the fish. It is something that we do not have at this time. But one of the data elements that was missing in the last stock assessment was commercial discards, primarily the estuarine gillnet fishery in North Carolina.

North Carolina has implemented an observer programs so it's likely that there will be some estimates available in the upcoming assessment on commercial discards. So that's an area that we have filled in some of our data gaps.

And another data gap would be selectivity at age. One of the problems with red drum has been the problem of immigration as the fish mature and move out of the estuaries and become less available to the gears.

And where you set the selectivity, particularly on the Age 2 relative to Age 3, determines a lot of the outcome of the stock assessment. So any information that can be made available either through tagging studies or through independent surveys to provide

better information on selectivity would be very useful in the stock assessment.

Some of the major tasks that we discussed at the last, the meeting moving forward for the 2007, I'm sorry, for the data workshop that's upcoming, we want to meet early 2007 to begin considering how the data will be pulled for the upcoming assessments.

And one of the primary things that we want to accomplish is we want to put together an historical document. And this document will outline data sources that have been used in the past, methodology.

And this information will be available both for the technical committee to use in putting together the assessment but also be in the document that can go forward to the peer review so there will be no questions about how the data was used moving forward.

Another thing that we thought was very pertinent to the upcoming assessment was to try to figure out how the data could be stored at a central location. Our first choice was to try to find a web site or some central location where the data could be stored electronically where members of the technical committee and other people working on the stock assessment could actually log onto a website and both access the data and analyze the data.

If we're not able to find a central website, then we'll probably go with some sort of remote storage where we can pass and circulate the documents and information among members of the technical committee.

Also, as I mentioned before, it will be very important to determine how state regulations may affect the assessment results. Because states have chosen such different size limits and bag limits we will need to look very closely to determine if the assessment can be pulled together across state and if those results will be accurate.

One of the biases in the last assessment was pulling together South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, when

Florida actually does an independent assessment and had relatively high SPR values.

But when you pulled that together with South Carolina and Georgia it actually pulled the SPR values down considerably. So we may be getting a mixture of SPR values across the states and we can't see that as a, you know, pull the states together.

Another issue that was discussed at this last meeting were the biological reference points. Right now we have a 30 percent overfishing definition and a 40 percent goal as part of Amendment 2.

We had some brief discussions on this. And the primary purpose is the technical committee would like to go look at the available literature and try to determine what the most appropriate biological reference points are for red drum.

Some argue that 40 percent is appropriate; some think maybe a slightly lower SPR may be appropriate for a long-lived fish that matures at an early age. But this is something that we would like to look at more closely just to make sure we're moving forward with the correct biological reference points.

Other issues that were discussed at this meeting, we talked briefly about the need for information on the recreational releases. And one way we talked about getting at this information was to start some type of logbook program.

I believe some states such as Florida, Maryland and I think Virginia has a volunteer tagging program to obtain some rates. But some of these states already have some programs and they're getting some of this information for different species but it's definitely a major need for red drum to obtain length information on recreational releases.

Another issue that was discussed was a proposed red drum summit. The idea here was to bring together managers from fisheries with industry reps and also user recreational fishermen together at a summit to discuss the needs for red drum, where we are in terms of management, what our goals are, and what research recommendations we need to move forward.

And hopefully both the managers can learn from them fishermen about what is going on with the fishery and then the fishermen can learn the needs that the managers have. So there was mixed feelings on the technical committee with regard to this issue. I think everybody thought it was a really good idea. Some questioned how well it could be pulled off. But it's certainly something we're going to look at in the future, moving forward.

Also at the meeting South Carolina and Georgia gave an overview of their stock enhancement programs. And one of the things that came out of this meeting was that the technical committee is recommending that a subcommittee, stock enhancement subcommittee, be put together. And I believe that's your next agenda item that you'll be discussing.

You guys have already talked briefly today about the red drum long line survey. You've had a better update than what I had today so I'll leave that. And Mike Murphy was elected as the vice chair. So that concludes our business. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Lee. Any questions for Lee? Robert, or Bob.

MR. SADLER: Yes, I wanted to update the board on the status of the red drum management transfer action that we're working on in the southeast region. It looks like now the end of 2006 is targeted for publication of the proposed rule.

The delay is due to the very heavy workload of our attorneys who are reviewing many other actions. I wanted to let everybody know that we are continuing with it, though, so there has been some progress since the last meeting.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob. Now that they're finished with a long line survey they'll probably get back on that.

MR. SADLER: That's right, yes.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Sorry, I just had to have that little catty remark. Robert.

MR. ROBERT H. BOYLES, JR.: Thank you, Spud. Lee, just curious, we in South Carolina have been doing an adult long line survey for a number of years and just curious as to why that data wasn't included. We've been doing it off of Charleston for a number of years.

MR. PARAMORE: Included in the previous assessment? I'm not sure whether that data goes back to the mid-90s or -- so at the time we did the last assessment there would only have been a couple of years of data so that probably was not enough. But moving forward with this assessment it has probably been at least ten years. It may be something we can look at including.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any other questions for Lee? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: I know one of the options we discussed for warehousing the data -- I will direct this to Bob and/or Luiz -- was we discuss, Bob, whether or not the South Atlantic Council Website that Roger has constructed that is being hosted at Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute might serve as a possible repository for those data.

And I think Mike was going to check with Tina Udouj to see if that was a possibility. Do you or Luiz know if that inquiry was made and what the outcome was?

DR. MAHOOD: Yes, I don't know, Wilson. I'll check into that.

DR. BARBIERI: Same here. I heard some talk about this. And some funding issues were brought up. And I'm not sure where that discussion ended. I think people are still talk about it.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Wilson, a follow up.

DR. LANEY: Well, I think if I remember it, Lee, we also, and Spud, we also discussed the fact that probably the ACCSP would be the logical place to warehouse such data and especially given that they've already created a lobster data warehouse, sort of.

So that adoption I guess was going to be explored. And I don't remember who we asked, if anyone, to explore that option. But that was the other one that we discussed.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Yes, I think, you know, this shows the value of activating the technical committee and getting them started early so that instead of, you know, 12 months out from an assessment we're doing this 36 months out from a planned assessment which gives us plenty of time to deliberate and to solve some of our problems and make sure that we've got everything lined up in a row.

And that's, I realize there are budget implications for that but I think it is very important that we use this. This is a good test case for doing it, particularly something that's very complicated like red drum which is one of these sort of quasi-interstate fisheries that is kind of, again, has a localized component and then there is a true interstate component and it's kind of complicated. Bob, do you have a comment?

MR. ROBERT E. BEAL: Yes, just briefly on the idea of a data repository or whatever it is being called. The commission, we've been exploring an FTP site which is essentially a file parking lot that people can access from different areas.

The way we envisioned it so far was just a temporary parking lot, you know, things that are deleted after a certain amount of time. But we may be able to modify that just, you know, it's not a real sophisticated tool to manipulate data, by any means.

It's just to, you know, put a file there and someone from North Carolina can get to someone from Florida's data through that Website. So we'll look into that and that might be a way to get out of this, you know to create a file cabinet that everybody can get into and essentially be a free way to do it. So we'll let you know how that goes.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right, thank you, Bob. Any other questions for Lee? If not, Lee, thank you for that report and thank you for the leadership of

the Red Drum Technical Committee. As he mentioned, we do have an action item related to the technical committee's deliberation.

RED DRUM STOCK ENHANCEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

In your briefing materials you have a, sort of an issue statement related to the formation of a Red Drum Stock Enhancement Subcommittee along with nominees from four states. Are there any questions?

Do I need to review this document? In the interest of time I think it's pretty self-explanatory. The board has already received a presentations on red drum stock enhancement and it's an emerging issue area and something that we need to be very vigilant about.

And we've got some appropriate persons to, lined up to do that and to help us provide responsible oversight for how, you know, hatchery-reared red drum may be assimilated into a long-term management plan. Wilson.

DR. LANEY: The only question I have, Mr. Chairman, I don't know the backgrounds of all of the folks that have been recommended but the only question I had was would it be advisable for us to try and get someone with genetic expertise on the subcommittee?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: That is certainly something that these can, you know, I sort of see these as the core members and expanding this as we need to. I know that Dr. Dennison from South Carolina is certainly very skilled and knowledgeable in the arena of fisheries genetics, particularly as it applies to hatchery-reared fish.

He can speak that mysterious language that leaves the rest of us behind. But that's certainly something that, you know, again we'll look to the subcommittee to bring on board their needed expertise. If there's not any further discussion I'd like to have a motion.

DR. DANIEL: **So moved.**

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I have a motion from Dr. Daniel. Do I have a second? Second from Robert Boyles. Any discussion? And we certainly will welcome participation from any of the other states.

The more, the merrier on a situation like this, as long as it's within the budget which is a whole other matter we have to discuss. Any opposition? If not we'll consider the **motion approved**. Thank you.

OTHER BUSINESS

All right, moving along, we're getting kind of in the short rows here. I want to call on Dr. Laney to give us a brief update about the co-op tagging cruise.

DR. LANEY: It will be brief, Mr. Chairman, thank you. The dates for the cooperative winter tagging cruise will be approximately January the fifteenth through the 26th off the coast of North Carolina and Virginia.

And I will be hopefully this week sending out a solicitation for scientific party members. And I will take the opportunity to thank the states of North Carolina and Maryland, in particular, for their past participation and likely future participation in that.

Most of you are aware we go out each winter for a week to two weeks and tag striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, red drum, horseshoe crabs and spiny dogfish. So, if you're interested in the particulars see me. But most of your staff folks that have participated in the past will be getting a solicitation for that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Wilson. Appreciate that. We've got another other business item that Nichola just called my attention to. Are you going to put that up on the board? We've got a couple of housekeeping things here.

I need affirmation from the board for these appointments. We have an addition to the Atlantic Croaker Plan Review Team. And there is also some new members to the Red Drum Technical Committee.

DR. DANIEL: **Move approval.**

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I have a motion from Dr. Daniel. Do I have a second? I have a second from Robert Boyles. Any discussion? Any opposition? Consider **the motion carried**. All right, Dr. Daniel, I'm going to turn it over to you to talk about southern kingfish.

DR. DANIEL: Yes, I'll make this brief because I know we need to move on. North Carolina has been working on an assessment for southern kingfish for the last six-eight months. And one of the problems that we discovered in our peer reviews was the geographic distribution of kingfish really lends itself to an inter-jurisdictional fishery management plan.

North Carolina probably produces around 40 to 45 percent of the southern kingfish. Florida is the biggest player with South Carolina and Georgia making up the remainder. As many of you may recall, there was an issue last year with a right whale off the coast of Georgia/Northeast Florida that was attributed to the kingfish fishery.

There has been some discussion about the possibility of developing an interstate fishery management plan for southern kingfish. And so we will -- in order to do a coastwide assessment -- and I believe this fishery is important to all of us at the South Atlantic Board level -- we really do need to bring all the states together to get the various length and age and landings information that is available from the other states and maybe even some independent indexes that right now we're struggling with in North Carolina.

One of the problems with kingfish is, as you know, we've got three species. But it seems that at least for us the dominant species is southern kingfish. And I believe that would hold true in the rest of the South Atlantic.

So, Mr. Chairman, I bring just forward for your thoughts maybe not at this meeting since our time is short but at our next meeting with the possibility of considering moving forward and developing a

southern kingfish fishery management plan under Atlantic States.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Dr. Daniel. Any questions or comments for Dr. Daniel? In the absence thereof, perhaps what we will do is at our next meeting get into a little more elaborate discussion on this, perhaps even a formal presentation of some of the work that has been done in North Carolina and with a discussion of how an expansion of that would be beneficial in the region and along the coast and then go from there. How does that sound?

DR. DANIEL: I'd be happy to do that, Mr. Chairman, if it is the interest of the Board to proceed with that.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I certainly see no opposition to that. Wilson, do you have a comment?

DR. LANEY: I just had a quick question for Louis in view of our previous conversation about spotted sea trout. Do we have data that show that southern kingfish is an inter-jurisdictional species?

DR. DANIEL: No, but the information that we have, well, we do have more, a lot more anecdotal information of fisherman following those fish down the coast and the fact that we do have no tagging data, though, that has been able to distinguish that there is movement across jurisdictions.

But I think based on the seasonality of kingfish catches and a lot of those types of things I certainly think that they have a much, they're much more inter-jurisdictional than spotted seatrout, from my opinion. But it will be an issue that we will brief the board on at the next meeting as to our justification for making that claim.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: And I certainly will support Lewis' claim about the importance of this species. It is always on the top of the list in Georgia as far as species caught by the recreational fishermen.

And it has becoming very important component of the for-hire fishery over time as more and more folks

are targeting this, you know, a relatively easy-caught fish, one that is good table fare, doesn't require a heavy investment of vessels and gear and that sort of thing.

So it's very important. And I think it would certainly behoove us to give it some attention. So we will move forward with that approach and we'll have a more detailed discussion of this at our next board meeting. Any other business to come before the South Atlantic Board?

If not, I'm going to call us to adjourn but I also want to ask your continued attention to the executive director. He has got an announcement to make. I appreciate everybody's attendance and I appreciate the work of staff and our technical committees as well.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on Tuesday, October 24, 2006, at 9:30 o'clock, a.m.)