

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

August 16, 2006
Arlington, VA

Board Approved: October 24, 2006

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Louis Daniel, NC DMF
Jimmy Johnson, proxy for Rep. Wainwright (NC)
Damon Tatem, NC Gov. Appt.
John Frampton, SC DNR
Robert Boyles, SC Leg. Appte.
Malcolm Rhodes, SC Gov. Appt.
Spud Woodward, GA DNR, Chair

John Duren, GA Gov. Appte.
Bill Johnson, proxy for Rep. Needleman (FL)
Luiz Barbieri, proxy for Gil McRae, FL FWC
April Price, FL Gov. Appt.
Tom Meyer, NMFS
Wilson Laney, USFWS

Ad hoc State Representatives

Gordon Colvin, NY DEC
Pat Augustine, NY Gov Appt.
Peter Himchak, NJ DFW
Roy Miller, DE DFW

Russel Dize, proxy for Sen. Colburn (MD)
Bruno Vasta, MD Gov. Appt.
AC Carpenter, PRFC

Staff

Vince O'Shea
Nichola Meserve

Ruth Christiansen
Bob Beal

Guests

Dick Brame, CCA
Chip Lynch, NOAA

Keith Taniguishi, USFWS
Geoff White, ACCSP

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Motion to approve the SEAMAP Budget Allocation Plan.
Motion made by Dr. Daniel, second by Mr. Frampton. Motion carries without objection (p.10).

**ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES
COMMISSION
SUMMER MEETING**

**SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**Doubletree Hotel Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia**

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The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Washington Ballroom of Doubletree Hotel Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia, August 16, 2006, and was called to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Spud Woodward.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIRMAN SPUD WOODWARD: Good morning to everybody. Welcome to our South Atlantic Board meeting, once again starting promptly at eight o'clock in the morning, so that we can clear the deck for other things that are going to be important today.

There are species that need our attention, but I appreciate everybody's attendance this morning. Before we get into the agenda, I want turn it over to Bob to make some introductions.

MR. ROBERT E. BEAL: Thank you, Spud. Earlier in the week, at the Lobster Management Board, I introduced a couple of new staff members. Most of the folks around the table here right now are not on the Lobster Management Board, so I figured it would probably make sense to do that again.

To my right is Melissa Paine. Melissa just began with the Commission in early August. She is going to be the SEAMAP Coordinator, NEAMAP Coordinator; also, staff the Management and Science Committee, Stock Assessment Committee; work with the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences and Protected Species work at the Commission.

Melissa did attend the meeting of the SEAMAP committees that I'll be talking about in a few minutes, but I figured it was not quite fair to throw her into this meeting and explain everything that's going on with the history of SEAMAP and where we intend to spend the new money. I will go ahead and go through that, but Melissa is here, and she has gotten up to speed pretty quickly.

The other person I would like to introduce is to Spud's left. It is Nichola Meserve. Nichola will be the staffer for the South Atlantic Board; in addition to striped bass and weakfish, so she will have a pretty full plate, also. I just wanted to introduce the new folks to the Commission, and please help me in welcoming them to the Commission.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob, and welcome, Melissa and Nichola. We appreciate your being here. Just so you all will be forewarned, I promised Nichola that we conduct our business in a very genteel and dignified manner, and that we try to set the standard for proper behavior for the Commission. I said that we, about 90 percent of the time, manage to do that, so just keep that in mind as we proceed through the day's meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

You should have in front of you now a revised agenda. This is slightly different than the agenda you received in your briefing materials. Are there any additions or changes to the agenda? If not, we will consider that accepted by consensus.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

You also received the Proceedings from our last meeting in February in your briefing materials. Are there any modifications or changes? Wilson.

DR. WILSON LANEY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Joe, in the minutes for that meeting, Dr. Charlie Wenner's name was misspelled. I think it was "Winter", W-I-N-T-E-R, and it should be "Wenner", W-E-N-N-E-R; is that correct, South Carolina guys over there. Isn't it "Wenner", W-E-N-N-E-R?

MR. ROBERT H. BOYLES, JR.: Yes.

DR. LANEY: Okay. So, that's the only change I saw.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Robert.

MR. BOYLES: Yes, Spud, thank you. In reading the minutes, I was a little confused, because I actually missed the last board meeting. There were some references to "Mal", M-A-L, and I believe it was actually "Mel Bell".

And I don't know, I think those comments were actually attributed to Dr. Rhodes, so I'm not really sure exactly what went on. Maybe those of you who

were there could discern, but some of the context suggested some of the comments were actually attributed to Mel Bell and not Dr. Rhodes.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Okay, we will go back through those and make those adjustments. Assuming we will make those corrections, any other issues? If not, then we can accept those by consensus, assuming they will be corrected. We assure you they will be, and we want to make sure we get our South Carolina colleagues properly identified. It might have something to do with the way they speak, Joe, I don't know.

PUBLIC COMMENT

All right, this is the time in our meeting that we allow for public comment. If there is anyone here from the public who would like to make a comment about the business of the South Atlantic Board, please come forward.

Okay, I see no one, so we will move into our agenda, Item Number 4, and I'm going to turn it over to Bob.

SEAMAP ACTIVITIES

MR. BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the beginning of the meeting, there were three documents passed out to you, in addition to the agenda. One of the documents is a series of five pages of tables.

The front of that is "Fiscal Year 2006 SEAMAP Funding Analysis". I will be going through that, as well as all the tables that are behind that document, stapled together, during this presentation, kind of putting more meat on those bones.

There's also two other documents that were handed around. They are the "South Atlantic 2007 Program Budget Justification". It is essentially a narrative describing how the South Atlantic Committee came up with their priorities that they brought forward to the joint meeting with the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.

I will go through some of the justification, as well, as I go through my presentation. The third document is a description of the proposed data warehousing and data distribution program. That is a description of the documents that were handed out.

I will go ahead and go through my presentation. There's probably a couple of points in there I should probably pause and ask for questions rather than going through the whole thing. There is definitely a

whole lot of numbers and a whole lot of different projects that the committee came up with.

REPORT FROM SEAMAP ANNUAL MEETING

The SEAMAP Annual Meeting took place about ten days ago, August 2nd through 4th, down in Charleston. The 2nd and the 3rd, the South Atlantic Committee met individually to develop the proposed budget for the South Atlantic component.

Then we got together with the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Committee on the 3rd and 4th to have a joint meeting and discuss priorities across all the programs and components of the SEAMAP Program.

The South Atlantic Committee Meeting, what they did was they developed a detailed budget, assuming some different levels of funding increases, which I will go through in a minute. In general, the priorities were developed to respond to the high-priority fishery-independent needs and addressing the South Atlantic Council, the SEDAR Process, and the ASMFC needs.

There's a number of research needs identified in the stock assessments, as well as the peer reviews that have taken place recently. We essentially tried to respond to all those data needs of those three programs.

At the joint meeting, the different components unanimously approved the budget that I'll go through and the allocation for potential increases that we're hoping to see. What they did was they took a range of potential funding increases and developed budgets to essentially respond to all those different scenarios that appear to be being talked about on Capitol Hill.

I will go through those as well. Just as kind of a starting point, where are we in 2006 and how much money have we received and distributed through the SEAMAP Program? In 2006 we initially started with \$1.385 million, but then there were a series of rescissions that you can see on the first page of those tables that I've passed around.

That resulted in \$1.365 million being distributed among the three components of the SEAMAP Program. The South Atlantic received around \$384,000 last year, which is about 28.1 percent of the overall share of the SEAMAP money.

The Gulf of Mexico got the largest portion, and the Caribbean and the National Marine Fisheries Service, you can see the numbers on your table, as well. The South Atlantic component is made up of ASMFC

administrative costs, which are a partial salary for a coordinator, as well as meetings and travel, and overhead for the Commission.

The majority of the South Atlantic component goes to the state of South Carolina to fund their Nearshore Trawl Survey; and if you look at the sheet that I handed around, you can see that's around \$324,000 that goes to the state of South Carolina.

You can also see the breakdown of where the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean money goes to. One other point, under the National Marine Fisheries Service, about \$6,000 of their money was set aside for an independent peer review, which I will go through in minute. I will update you on the status of that in a minute.

\$220,000 of that is set aside to do some survey work, data management, as well as overhead for the administration of the grant.

Moving on to how the committee went forward and developed proposed budgets for 2007, if you go to the second page of the tables that I handed out, you can see that there's quite a range of numbers being talked about up on Capitol Hill.

The President's request was \$5.09 million; the Senate budget, as it stands right now, is \$7.4 million; and the House budget did not report a funding level for the SEAMAP Program. Should either the President's request or the Senate numbers go through, clearly, it's a pretty substantial increase to the SEAMAP Program.

The discussions on Capitol Hill focused on two things that they would like to see done with that additional money. Those are responses to the hurricanes in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, Katrina in particular, as well as working on some of the new LNG facilities that are being proposed for the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic.

So, those are the notions that are going around that have prompted the folks up on the Hill to propose to increase the budget for the SEAMAP Program.

This gets a little complicated. As the joint committee sat down to figure out we should allocate this new money between programs, they went through a number of discussions on prioritizing different research programs based on their scientific merit and considered developing spreadsheets, putting everybody's research programs on there and developing some sort of scoring system to prioritize

the programs, and a lot of complicated approaches to allocating the new money.

But what they came up with was that's essentially a month-long project, probably, as a joint group to sit down and scientifically prioritize everyone's project. So they had to go with essentially a Plan B, which was just sit down; and based on what we know about how the SEAMAP programs have been conducted in the three component areas, how should we divide up the money?

And what their response and the unanimous decision was, was to take the base funding for 2006, which were the numbers I mentioned earlier, and double that money first, so that creates a new base, which is the third column on the slide up there, which is two times the 2006 base.

So, any funding level between zero and \$2.73 million was going to be allocated based on the shares that resulted from the 2006 allocation. So, if Congress ends up anywhere between zero and \$2.73 million, all the components will receive their same shares that they received in the past year.

Any increase in funding beyond the two times base will be allocated based on the new shares, which are highlighted – actually, there is a typo in the slide up here. The 44.8 percent should be Gulf of Mexico; 28.1 should be South Atlantic.

But if you look at the column titled "Increased Funding", those will be shares that we used to allocate any additional money beyond \$2.73 million. As you can see, the South Atlantic goes up from 28.1 percent to 32.9 percent, and the National Marine Fisheries Service goes down a little bit, and Gulf of Mexico goes down a little bit, as well, to compensate for the increase in the South Atlantic.

If you look at the two right-hand columns on the screen or on the tables that were handed out, you'll see what the allocations would be should we get \$5.09 million or \$7.4 million. There's a little bit of a rounding error there, but we're within a few thousand dollars, so I think that's the base that the groups came up with. Is that clear enough or does anyone have any questions on how we got there?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Anybody have any question? Robert Boyles.

MR. BOYLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bob, I was not at the meeting in Charleston, but I'm just curious, given the political interest in the Gulf with LNG and hurricane relief, how our counterparts in

the Gulf are approaching this proposed allocation; do we know?

MR. BEAL: They were fairly comfortable with it. In the past the Gulf has recognized that the South Atlantic has taken bigger cuts as funding has been reduced or stayed status quo, essentially. As the cost of doing business has gone up, the South Atlantic has kind of borne the brunt of that more than the Gulf of Mexico.

They were comfortable with that position. The one issue that they did bring up, which I might as well bring up now, is that the representatives from the Gulf were a little bit concerned that the South Atlantic component hadn't done as much lobbying or contacting Capitol Hill to push for the new funding.

They requested that the states or the Commission kind of put their heads together and do some lobbying to push forward some of these numbers that are being proposed up on Capitol Hill right now.

You know, we're pretty close to getting it; if we just get a little of influence from the South Atlantic, maybe we can push this over the top and actually get the money this year. They did request additional lobbying either by the states or by the Commission.

But, as far as the work to be done, they were comfortable with the allocation. All the partners agreed that it's just that, it's a partnership, the money is supposed to go to three components, and they were comfortable, and the Caribbean was comfortable, as well.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any other questions about the formula about splitting any increases? If not, then, Bob, proceed.

MR. BEAL: Either everybody understands or they're so confused, they don't know what to ask. The 2007 budget was divided into five separate components, and this is detailed in the three final pages of the handout with the tables.

It's the South Atlantic Coastal Survey, the Bottom Mapping Fish Characterization and Assessment, the Pamlico Sound Survey, Data Management, and ASMFC Administrative. I'll just go through each of those quickly and describe what the committee's thinking was as they developed these priorities.

This is the South Atlantic Coastal Survey Budget under the different scenarios. The top line there is the survey number, which is actually the South

Carolina Survey, going out and conducting the trawl survey that's being done right now.

In the 2X column, you can see \$413,000. This is what South Carolina is indicating they need just to do what they did last year, essentially. They only received \$324,000 last year, and they're saying that the cost of fuel and boat time and everything else has gone up substantially, and they simply can't run that survey for anything under \$413,000.

If they receive funding less than that, they may have to reduce the stations or reduce days at sea and those sorts of things to compensate for that.

They have been putting off buying equipment, and they're kind of just cobbling together some of the pieces just to make that survey work at 2006 funding. They have indicated \$413,000 is their number.

At the meeting there was a lot of discussion on what happens if we just get status quo money, how do we divide that among the Gulf, the Caribbean, and the South Atlantic? The group didn't necessarily resolve that.

They did agree that the South Atlantic is going to need more money than the current status quo, which is the \$324,000, for the survey. Should we get status quo, we're going to have to get together on a conference call of the chairs, at least, of the components and have a discussion on how we want to reallocate the money and cover some of the expenses that are incurred by the survey.

The Gulf of Mexico is in a similar position. Some of their surveys are at the bare bones; and if they don't get more money, those surveys may have to be cut way back or discontinued.

At the \$5.09 million number, the total goes up to \$440,000. This is a similar survey to what is being done this year. It has a little bit more gut-content analysis, but it compensates for increases in personnel time and fuel time, as well.

The \$7.4 million, it goes up to \$660,000, and this is the similar survey, but the number of stations would increase probably around 50 percent, similar to what the number is there. This would lower the CV's and give more confidence to the data coming out of the South Carolina Survey.

Equipment is reflected in the second line, and that is just equipment used to support the survey. There is a description of what it would be. It's aging software and water-quality sensors and scales and those sorts of things.

It goes up to \$120,000 under the \$7.4 million just because of the magnitude of the survey increases, and they would need some additional equipment to run 50 percent more stations than they have before.

Under life history gut content, it will conducting a gut-content analysis of three species, three of the primary species caught in the South Carolina Survey. If you bump up to \$7.4 million, it would just increase the number of animals that are surveyed, but it would conduct the survey over the same three species of animals.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I'll tell you what, let's just take them one at a time. Anybody have any questions about this component? Bruno.

MR. BRUNO VASTA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bob, what are the three species; do you know?

MR. BEAL: I knew you were going to ask that. I don't remember right offhand, Bruno. We will get you that answer.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any other questions? If not, we'll move on to the next category.

MR. BEAL: All right, moving forward to the next component, which is Bottom Mapping, Fish Habitat Characterization, and Assessment Budget.

This one has a series of increased funding across the board. The early life history is some sampling for gag grouper and other species ingressing into estuarine habitats. As the funding goes up, the level of survey work goes up. The \$7.4 million or \$5.09 million level, the survey would be essentially comparable.

Gear and equipment was the second line, and this is purchasing equipment for longline surveys and trap work that's proposed in the next couple of lines. This would essentially be purchasing equipment that would be complementary to the Federal MARMAP Program that's going on right.

That would be snapper grouper work, red drum work, and coastal shark work. One of the main components of this part of the budget is funding for the Red Drum Survey, the longline survey that is some day going to get started. We'll go into that later.

The South Atlantic component of SEAMAP felt that it's appropriate to shift that survey out of the ACSCMA money and over to the SEAMAP Program, and hopefully we'll procure some long-

term funding for that program through that avenue. A majority of the equipment is funded to do that work.

The South Atlantic component also agreed that the Red Drum Longline Work can be modified and tweaked a little bit so it's also a shark survey, and you might as well get more bang for your buck out of doing the work if you're out there running the longline survey.

And, obviously, based on the shark meeting that we had earlier this week, that program is in need of some data. Life history gut content is similar to the South Carolina Trawl Survey. As the sampling level goes up, the level of analysis and specimens will go up, so it requires more money and more biologists to do that sampling.

The nearshore sampling line is conducting the trap survey, the longline survey for red drum and the snapper species, as well at the shark component that we talked about earlier. The MARMAP station component is just filling out some additional sampling stations to complement the MARMAP Program.

The final line is processing and cooperative sampling support. This is essentially piggybacking on some bottom mapping equipment on to the survey vessel as it travels to and from the stations.

If the vessel is transiting the areas that we need to do some bottom mapping for, you might as well tow some sensors and get some plankton survey and some bottom mapping work done and larval work and everything else as we're going along and doing the survey. That is a summary of that component's budget.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any questions about that? There doesn't appear to be so let's move on.

MR. BEAL: All right, we'll keep moving forward. This one is pretty straightforward. This is the Pamlico Sound Survey. North Carolina has funded a biologist to conduct a portion of their Pamlico Sound Survey, data write-ups and data analysis, and those sorts of things.

That funding is, I believe, drying up. Louis you might know more than I do, but I am not sure what the source of that funding is. I think 2006 may be the last year that funding is available.

The SEAMAP Program is proposing to essentially fund a biologist in North Carolina to run their Pamlico Sound Survey. This survey has been called

a SEAMAP Survey over the years, even though it really isn't receiving any direct funding by the SEAMAP Program, but the data is fed into the SEAMAP data base, and it provides a lot of valuable information for the SEAMAP Program. I think that one is pretty straightforward.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: All right, let's move on.

MR. BEAL: Okay. The next component is the data management component, which is described in one of the handouts that I mentioned earlier.

The first line is QAQC, and this would be hiring biologist at the increased funding levels to monitor the data and make sure it makes sense and do some quality checks as the data comes in and out of the SEAMAP Program.

The next couple of components are all under the South Atlantic data management portion of the project. It's developing GIS products for the program. As funding goes up, so does the level of mapping and GIS work that would go up commensurate with the increase in funding.

The environmental data processing is processing CTD data and other environmental data. As the sampling goes up and the number of vessel days go up and we have time on the water to do some chemical analysis of the water, this is sort of an additional piggybacking part of the survey, but this is the processing of that data that comes out of that survey work.

Data updates is keeping the system up to date, uploading the data, distributing the data and those sort of things, and that would take a fair amount of staff time to do that as well.

Data management in the South Atlantic SEAMAP component has been pointed out as one of the bottlenecks in the system right now. Getting the data out, it works, but it's not as efficient and there's not as much access as there could be by the South Atlantic partners and the assessment folks that want to use the SEAMAP data.

They have to do directly to the folks that are doing the survey in South Carolina; and if they are out on the vessel, it may be a couple of weeks before they can get back to them. If there is a way to develop a web-based interface, this is really what this is pushing for and have quality data accessible with all the caveats and metadata that it needs, so that the

biologists and the assessment folks can get at that data pretty easily.

Moving on, it's developing and enhancing the IMS System, which is the integrated mapping system. The final component is the web page, which is keeping the web page up to speed and creating all the links with the South Atlantic components, MARMAP and other programs that are comparable and complement the SEAMAP Program.

But right now you have to go to a series of different locations just to get that data and compile it, and it becomes fairly cumbersome to do. That's a summary of the data management budget.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Questions or comments, concerns? Dr. Wilson Laney serves on the SEAMAP Committee; is there anything that you'd like to add?

DR. LANEY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I will add, and I think Bob and Melissa will concur fully, had it not been for the hard work for our chairman, Roger Pugliese, from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I don't think we would have this little bit of bump up that we will see if we get the \$5.09 million or the \$7.4 million increases.

So, those of you who see Roger, especially the South Carolina contingent there, be sure to express your appreciation to him for the hard work he did. He put in a lot of extra hours during the evening coming up with this allocation scheme, and it took quite a bit of tactful discussion to get the Gulf contingent, especially, to agree to an increase while they basically take a little bit of a decrease under these increased allocations. So, we owe Roger a debt of appreciation for that.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Wilson, for making that comment. Louis.

DR. LOUIS DANIEL: I would just say that the committee has done a masterful job addressing the concerns that we raised and I raised at the last meeting. They've hit everything perfectly, in my opinion.

I don't think they could have done a better job putting this together. You know how important this stuff is to our region, and this goes a long way towards resolving a lot of the problems and a lot of the issues that I think we have.

If Bob is through and you're ready to move forward, I'd provide a motion to approve the '07 plan, if you're ready for that.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: I'll tell you what, if you'll just hold that just a second and let him cover the administrative component, and then I'll be more than happy to let you make that motion.

MR. BEAL: Thank you, this one should be pretty quick. This is the funding that comes to the Commission to support partial staff salaries, as well as the meetings and administrative costs associated with the SEAMAP Program.

As the level of funding goes up, the level of meetings and coordination that is going to be needed goes up proportionately. As you can see here, we go from 65 to \$85,000, something along those lines.

The majority of that will be used to cover meetings of the subcommittees and different components that will be planning the research work that's included. That's just a brief summary of the administrative costs.

APPROVAL OF SEAMAP BUDGET PLAN

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Okay, now I'll be glad to entertain a motion to approve this allocation plan and get a second, and then we can have a little discussion, if necessary.

We have a motion from Dr. Louis Daniel and we have a second from John Frampton to approve the SEAMAP Budget Allocation Plan. Is that adequate enough to everybody? Any discussion? Any opposition to the motion? If not, we will consider the motion approved by consensus.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, does anybody around the table have any updated information on where the congress is with regard to budget deliberations on this particular item?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Mr. Boyles.

MR. BOYLES: Wilson, I don't know about this particular item. As you noted, the House was silent with respect to SEAMAP. I do know that the difference between the House and the Senate on the NOAA Budget alone is some three-quarters of a billion dollars on NOAA alone. We will continue to work particularly at the House side, but I think it will be quiet for another month.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Yes, I think this issue of how to advocate for this funding is always a tricky

business, and every state operates under different rules and guidelines of how aggressive and assertive they can be. That does create a little bit of a challenge for us.

We all want to see the most funding made available for all of our fisheries data collection and analytical processes, but we obviously have to operate within the guidelines of our employers.

I encourage everyone to do what you can to get some support for this in congress and maybe we'll be fortunate enough to see a substantial increase.

I mean, whether it will be \$7 million obviously is kind of hard to believe that it would go there in this fiscal climate, but maybe something obviously between zero and \$7 million would be good. I encourage everybody to do what they can. Bob, do you want to carry on with SEAMAP discussion.

APPROVAL OF THE 2006 OPERATIONS PLAN

MR. BEAL: The next agenda item is the approval of the 2006 Operations Plan. This is more of an update. The South Atlantic Board approved this document at the February meeting with some changes. Those changes have been made.

The document I think was distributed back in mid-March to everybody. But, just as an update, it reflects the addition of common names or some misspellings of scientific names and some other clarifications on committee memberships and so those sorts of things.

There were relatively minor changes to the document that have all been made, I think it's a complete document. There are some copies on the back table should you not have the one that was mailed to you in March.

APPROVAL OF THE 2006-2010 MANAGEMENT PLAN

I'll keep on going. The approval of the 2006-2010 management plan, this is essentially a five-year strategic plan for SEAMAP. The South Atlantic Board, at their last meeting in February, did not approve the document that was before them.

They felt that some of the research priorities and the priorities for funding, should new money become available, were not necessarily in line with exactly what the South Atlantic Board felt they should, and they needed to be tweaked a little bit.

As the South Atlantic Committee met ten days or so ago and they developed their priorities for the SEAMAP Program, all those were in line essentially with the new priorities that the South Atlantic Board brought up back in February.

There is a question for the management board here, which is the plan is to update the document to reflect essentially what was just presented to the management board and the priorities included in that budget document.

The question for the Board is do you feel comfortable having staff, working with the Chair, Roger Pugliese, of the South Atlantic Committee, going back and modifying that document and calling it an approved document; or, would you rather have the modifications made and see that document at the annual meeting down in North Carolina?

Either one of those are viable options. I think the modifications to the document are pretty straightforward to reflect the priorities that are included in the budget that we just discussed.

The other rationale is for the South Atlantic Board not approving that document in February was the pending external peer review of the SEAMAP Program. The external review has not been initiated yet.

There was some discussion of whether it should occur before or after we get the funding increase, and the National Marine Fisheries Service coordinator felt why don't we get the additional money, assuming we get it, implement that, and then have the external peer review on how we're spending the new money and then a review of how well the SEAMAP Program is responding to the needs of the states in the South Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean.

Some folks around this table felt that was kind of backwards; maybe we should do the external peer review right now and decide where the deficiencies were in the SEAMAP Program and use the new money to fix those deficiencies.

As the Board continued talking in February, it appears to me, reading through the minutes, that you settled in on the fact that, well, let's go ahead and we can approve the document as soon as we get the budget priorities squared away, with the understanding that it's kind of a living document and if something comes out of the external peer review that needs to be modified between and 2010, we can modify that document to reflect those changes.

It's not set in stone; we're not locked into a course between now and 2010. It's just a guiding document that – you know, given the state of knowledge right now, this is the direction we think we're going in.

So, that question is out there on modifying and review of the five-year plan.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob. Any strong feelings one way or the other? I mean, we can certainly postpone approval of that management plan document until our next meeting. It won't be that far in the future. It's certainly not going to stop anything from happening.

If that makes everybody feel a little more comfortable to have some time to look over it and make sure that it does match up with our desires; or, as Bob has suggested, the alternative is basically accept it on the belief that it will reflect accurately what we have discussed today and what we discussed in the past. Any feelings one way or the other from the group? Louis.

DR. DANIEL: I am very comfortable with the direction that the committee is going and would feel comfortable either way. It probably wouldn't be a bad idea to have it come back to us just so we can go over it. But, I'm comfortable with the direction they're going; and if there's a preference, I'd support that.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: If not, we can just bring it back at the annual meeting just for the formalities of seeing the final document, and we'll accept it at that time. Does that suit everybody? Okay, it looks like by the nods of heads, that's fine.

Okay, thank you very much, Bob, for that concise update on SEAMAP. It's obviously a very important program to those of us in the South Atlantic and through the Gulf, and we appreciate the hard work of all the state representatives.

They have done a good job. I applaud their diplomacy in dealing with our brethren in the Gulf. That is not always an easy thing to do, but apparently they were very successful, and Lord knows what Roger actually did in those late hours of the night. Maybe we need him to work on some other things, but, anyway, thanks to Wilson and all the other folks that worked so hard on that program.

We'll move on the agenda unless there's any further discussions about SEAMAP. All right, Bob.

MR. BEAL: Okay, thank you. Yes, if you're lobbying or pushing for something, you want Roger on your side and not against you. He doesn't give up very easily.

UPDATE ON RED DRUM LONGLINE STUDY

Moving on to Agenda Item Number 5, which is an update on the Red Drum Longline Study, unfortunately, this is going to be a fairly quick update. All the paperwork has been submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service as far as the NEPA requirements of the study.

The budget documents and grant documents have been approved and are ready to go. They're waiting for a biological opinion to come out of the Southeast Regional Office on the study as far as the interactions with protected species; in particular, turtles.

About five or six weeks ago, we were told that document would be ready in one week. It apparently is still being held up in the review process down in the Southeast Region. I checked in yesterday with the person in the Protected Resources Office; and as of yesterday, it's still pending approval and being reviewed I think in the general counsel's office.

So, this is not much of an update. I know most of the states are ready to go. Georgia, in particular, has re-outfitted their boat and ready to do some surveying when they get the biological opinion. North Carolina, I think, was intending to be in on August 1st.

We're just waiting for an answer out of the Southeast Regional Office to kick that thing off. The program was funded using fiscal year 2005 money, which is what will be used for the 2006 sampling. 2006 fiscal year money will be used for the 2007 sampling.

All the grant paperwork has been submitted, and I think we've done everything that we need to do at the Commission level. If we get any questions back, we're able to respond to those pretty quickly.

There is two years of funding secured for the Red Drum Longline Study. There will be a question about additional SEAMAP money should that program shift over to the SEAMAP Program in future years. That's essentially where we are on that study.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob. This is a frustrating process. Just from the perspective of Georgia, we actually have in our hands approved letters of authorization to deploy the gear

from the Southeast Regional Office and from HMS, but yet we cannot get over the hurdle of actually mobilizing the money through the NOAA grants process to get it into the hands of the respective states.

You know, I hate when my predictions come true, but I think I made a prediction, when we started talking about this in 2005, that we'd better be very careful about taking these gifts from congress and then not using them effectively.

So here we are approaching the end of 2006, and we have yet to produce anything significant for that money. I realize it's a big bureaucracy out there, but it's very frustrating back home to explain to the folks who have outfitted our boat.

I mean, we received an advance from the Commission, thankfully, but we literally have a boat sitting there with gear on board, pointed at the ocean, key in the ignition, ready to go, and all we need is somebody to give us the green light from the Southeast Region so the money can flow.

So, we're ready to go, and we'll keep pushing on this as much as we can. We requested that this biological opinion and environmental assessment be valid for at least a five-year period, obviously, so we don't have to go through these hoops year in and year out, as well as that will be necessary if we decide to use other federal dollars.

Whether it be for fish restoration or whatever it might be, we're going to need to have that as a matter of record. We're trying to get there, but it is rather frustrating. We have missed one season of red drum in the autumn, and we have missed a season of shark sampling this spring and summer.

If things don't change, we're going to miss another autumn of red drum sampling. It doesn't look too good when we can't get our own house in order. Any comments? Robert.

MR. BOYLES: Mr. Chairman, not on this. I have an update on the SEAMAP stuff.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Okay, why don't you go ahead and make those comments, Robert.

MR. BOYLES: Weakfish, whiting and croaker are the three species.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: And for our colleagues to the north, that whiting is *Menticrius Americanus*, southern kingfish. I know there gets to

be a little confusion over that sometimes, but just for the record. Louis.

DR. DANIEL: Do you have any recommendations on anything this Board might be able to do to jumpstart – I know, as the Council Chair, have tried to use every influence I have to get this red drum work going.

I think all the states recognize the importance of getting this adult information for our update that's coming up. Is there anything you think this Board could do to help jumpstart or get somebody on the ball to get this going sooner rather than later?

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Pat Augustine probably knows some fellows in New York that could maybe get this done, but I don't know. We've tried every polite thing that we can do. My understanding is it is now hung up in the legal staff process.

The take-home lesson is never use the word "longline" if you can avoid using it, because it just automatically throws things into a completely different arena.

You know, aside from continuing to call Roy and just ask Roy to try to give this some personal attention, I don't know what else to do. I'm certainly open to any suggestions if anybody else has any epiphanies that they can share with us that they have used in the past.

Maybe we just need to start tag-teaming and calling Roy everyday until such time as we finally get permission. If we don't move something quickly, we risk losing another fall season. Okay, I think we've about beat that one enough.

UPDATE ON RED DRUM TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY

To carry on in the theme of red drum, I would like to ask Tom Meyer to talk about another lengthy process, which is the transfer of management authority from the Council over to the Commission

MR. TOM MEYER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, our Southeast Region has the lead in this transfer from the Magnuson Act to the Atlantic Coastal Act. It's a lower priority on their screen, mainly because it really would not be a change at all in the regulation.

The regulation would continue on as it is. I do have a commitment from the Southeast Region to hopefully

have at least the proposed rule out by the end of the year. Actually, Wilson didn't mention that there is a slight change in that EFH would somewhat be dropped, and we are trying to work around that.

Hopefully, we'll have something out by the end of the year. The documents are done. They're just in review in the Southeast Region by the lawyers. So, stay tuned. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Tom. There's a common theme there, isn't there? Well, I hope that they'll give the Longline EA a higher priority than transfer authority. Maybe that's what we need to ask. But, anyway, the most important part is we are not risking anything in terms of red drum conservation by the delay in this process.

OTHER BUSINESS

We've moved along pretty quickly here. I have one item under other business that I would just like to discuss, and then I'll certainly open it up to the Board for any other items they'd like to discuss since we have some time.

There will be a meeting of the Red Drum Technical Committee at the end of this month. It's scheduled as part of the late August meeting week. I strongly encourage each state to make sure that they do have a representative there if they have an interest in red drum management and conservation.

I have been working with Nichola on the agenda. One of the main topics of discussion is going to be the 2009 assessment, how we'll be moving forward with data collection to support that, as well as some other topics related to red drum stock enhancement and that sort of thing.

But, please, by all means, make sure you've got some body or some bodies there to be part of this discussion. I know the state of North Carolina is currently working on looking at their Red Drum Management Process.

So, every time a state goes through this, we learn a little more on how we might improve regional management. I plan on attending that meeting to try to participate directly in those deliberations, but please make sure that you all have someone there. It's going to be in Raleigh. Any questions or comments about that? Bob.

MR. BEAL: Just a comment. The Red Drum Technical Committee probably hasn't met for two years, maybe, maybe longer. Would it be helpful for

the states around the table if we sent out what we believe is our current list of Red Drum Technical Committee members?

You guys can review it and make sure we're all on the same page as to who we think are the members of the group. We'll go ahead and do that when we get back to the office; and if there's changes, just let us know and we'll get them put on the committee.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Any other business to be brought before the South Atlantic Board? Bob.

MR. BEAL: On a similar note, the Atlantic Croaker Technical Committee is going to be meeting during that same meeting week at the end of August. They're going to be reviewing the triggers that are included in the Atlantic Croaker Fishery Management Plan.

The triggers, if they're met or tripped, they initiate a full stock assessment for the Atlantic croaker stock. If they are not tripped, the triggers still will provide the South Atlantic Board with some information on the status of the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic components of the Atlantic Croaker Fishery, landings and survey numbers and those sorts of things. So, that report will come back to this group at the annual meeting.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Bob. Louis, do you have a question or a comment?

DR. DANIEL: Just another other business item. I just wanted the South Atlantic Board to be aware that the South Atlantic Council is in the process of development our Amendment 15 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Group.

That includes at least one species of interest to this Board, Spanish mackerel. One of the things that we're looking to do is add some species to that management unit, particularly Atlantic bonita, and put in measures on false albacore.

I don't know about all the states within our purview or to the north, but certainly there is interest in sportfishing community for false albacore and Atlantic bonita.

It may be an issue that we want to discuss when Amendment 15 is approved, perhaps putting in some complementary measures or doing something through the South Atlantic Board to help facilitate those new species in that plan. But, that's all, just to have it on the radar screen.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Louis, and that certainly is some food for thought, and we'll watch what happens with management of those species through the South Atlantic Council.

In sort of a related topic, just for an update and for clarification, you will recall at our February meeting we discussed the issue of the inconsistency between the bycatch reduction device certification at the federal level through the council process and the certification criteria through our Interstate Fishery Management Plan Process.

We strongly recommended to the Weakfish Board that they consider taking action to make the qualifying criteria and evaluating criteria consistent with the federal process. This would avoid confusion, obviously, and empower the National Marine Fisheries Service to accelerate some of their BRD testing.

My understanding is – and, Louis, you can certainly comment to this – is that message was sent loud and clear, and the Weakfish Board will be considering that as part of the other actions that they may be taking in the near future. Louis.

DR. DANIEL: Yes, sir, that is correct, and we will be dealing with that. In fact, I did get several calls from Weakfish Board members asking about that, and it seems to be that everyone is on board to get those new requirements in line with the Weakfish Plan to get us out there and testing more and better bycatch reduction devices. But, yes, we will be discussing that tomorrow morning during the Weakfish Board.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you. Any other business to come before the South Atlantic Board? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Spud, I'll just mention, for everybody, that planning for the 2007 SEAMAP Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise is underway. We will be sending a solicitation out to the states and other partners in the not too distant future soliciting volunteers for scientific party members for that cruise.

It was originally going to be on the Albatross IV because the Oregon II was going to be unavailable. Now it's back on the Oregon II again because the Albatross is unavailable due, I guess, to budget cuts that necessitated a reduction in the their sea day.

So, the folks in the Southeast Region are very graciously accommodating us and changing their

shipyard schedule so that they can run the Oregon II up the east coast during the winter and be off Cape Hatteras in January, which is not always a real pleasant place to be.

But, we are very grateful that they are going to provide that platform, so we'll be out there in January again tagging Atlantic sturgeon, striped bass, horseshoe crabs, red drum and spiny dogfish.

CHAIRMAN WOODWARD: Thank you, Wilson. It's obviously a good opportunity for folks who would like to spend some time out at sea and see some interesting things. And you get wear nice orange hardhats, too, I believe.

Any other business to come before the South Atlantic Board? If not, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Tom Meyer; seconded by Malcolm Rhodes. We stand adjourned. Thank you very much for your time and attendance.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 o'clock a.m., August 16, 2006.)

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