

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

**The Westin Alexandria**  
Alexandria, Virginia  
**February 3, 2016**

**Approved May 23, 2016**

Proceedings of the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board Meeting  
February 2016

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Proceedings of the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board Meeting  
February 2016

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board Members**

Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Asm. Andrzejczak (LA)	Kyle Schick, VA, proxy for Sen. Stuart (LA)
Russ Allen, NJ, proxy for D. Chanda (AA)	Louis Daniel, NC (AA)
Tom Fote, NJ (GA)	Michelle Duval, NC, Administrative proxy
John Clark, DE, proxy for D. Saveikis (AA)	Robert Boyles, SC (AA)
Roy Miller, DE (GA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)	Patrick Geer, GA, proxy for Rep. Nimmer (LA)
Bill Goldsborough, MD (GA)	Jim Estes, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Mike Luisi, MD, proxy for D. Blazer (AA)	Martin Gary, PRFC
Ed O'Brien, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)	Wilson Laney, USFWS
Joe Cimino, VA, proxy for J. Bull (AA)	John Carmichael, SAFMC

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

**Ex-Officio Members**

**Staff**

Toni Kerns  
Robert Beal  
Max Appelman

Megan Ware  
Jeff Kipp

**Guests**

Derek Orner, NOAA

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Edison Ballroom of the Westin Hotel, Alexandria, Virginia, February 3, 2016, and was called to order at 3:35 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Jim Estes.

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIRMAN JIM ESTES: I'd like to call the South Atlantic Management Board meeting to order please. My name is Jim Estes; I am the Administrative Proxy from the state of Florida. I am going to guide you through this meeting. This is the first time that I've done one of these, so I have two requests.

One of those requests is that you be patient with my bumbling, and the second request is please refrain from using the terms, menhaden, pogy, and bunker; because I see that it causes great confusion.

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: The first item of business is to approve the agenda. Are there any changes recommended for the agenda?

I think what we're going to do with the agenda is we're going to move six and seven around. We'll do the Fishery Management Plan Review first and then we'll talk about the spotted sea trout issue after that. Seeing no suggested changes to the agenda; I see it approved by consent.

#### **APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: The next thing is approval of our proceedings from our November, 2015 meeting.

Are there any suggestions or edits for changes there? Seeing none; we'll see it approved by consent.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Next is public comment. We don't have anyone signed up for public comment. Is there anybody in the audience that would like to make some public comment on items not on the agenda?

#### **UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF RED DRUM BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT AND DESK REVIEW**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Seeing none; we'll go to Item Number 4, Update on Progress of Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Desk Review. I'll turn that over to Jeff.

MR. JEFF J. KIPP: The Red Drum Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee have met several times over the last few months via teleconference; to review continued work on the stock synthesis red drum northern and southern stock models, and progress on implementing some of the recommendations from the SEDAR 44 Peer Review Workshop.

We actually just wrapped up the report this past Monday and sent that to the Technical Committee, and we will be meeting again via teleconference next Friday to review those documents and to get the Technical Committees approval before sending those documents to reviewers for a desk review. We anticipate presenting the results of that review and assessment to this board at the May meeting. If there are any questions on that assessment I can take those now.

#### **UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE ATLANTIC CROAKER AND SPOT STOCK ASSESSMENTS**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Any questions? I guess seeing none; we'll go on to talk about the update on the progress of the Atlantic croaker and spot assessment.

MR. KIPP: For the spot and Atlantic croaker stock assessment process, we will actually be holding an assessment workshop in Charleston,

South Carolina next week. We'll be reviewing some of the methods and assessment approaches we'll be looking at for both spot and croaker at that assessment workshop.

We'll also be having a second assessment workshop for the two species assessment later this summer. We are still on track to have those assessments reviewed through an external ASMFC peer review this fall. If there are any questions on those assessments I can take those now.

### **2015 SPOT FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Any questions? You all are making this real easy for my first day. I think now we'll go to Fishery Management Plan Review, and we'll expect to have some action items on this.

MS. MEGAN WARE: Hi everyone, I'll be going through the 2015 Spot FMP Review today. I'll start with the status of the fishery. This graph here shows commercial harvest in blue and recreational harvest in orange; from 1950 to 2014. Overall we've seen an increase in landings over the last two years that would be different than the trend we were seeing prior to 2012.

Total coastwide catch is estimated at 8.37 million pounds, an increase of over 2 million pounds from 2013, and this is roughly half a million pounds over the 10 year average. The commercial fishery accounted for roughly 65 percent of these landings with 5.4 million pounds, and this is more than quadruple the commercial catch in 2012.

Virginia landed approximately 74 percent of commercial harvest, followed by North Carolina. This graph looks at the recreational harvest in millions of fish. The red bars are harvest and the green bars are those spot that were released. In 2014 recreational harvest was 8.7 million fish, and that is up 4 million fish from 2012.

Anglers in Virginia were responsible for roughly 45 percent of the total, and this was followed by North Carolina and then Maryland. The estimated number of spot released by recreational anglers in 2014 was 3.75 million fish, which is significantly lower than the amount that was released in 2013; but it is on par with the time series average.

In terms of a stock assessment, we don't have a complete coastwide stock assessment, but as Jeff just mentioned we're working on one now that should be done at the end of the year. In the interim we monitor the stock through the traffic light approach as stipulated in Addendum I. Just as a reminder, the addendum sets a threshold of 30 percent, which is that black line you see on the graph here.

That represents moderate concern for the fishery. This graph here has actually been a little bit revised than what is in your packet for meeting materials; and I'll be putting this graph into the document when it goes on our website. The reason it has been revised is that the old graph showed very high proportion of red in 2014, and that seemed a little counter intuitive to me; considering we had very high landings in 2014.

I asked that it be redone, and as a result the proportion of red did decrease. Now the harvest composite index is not tripped for 2014. This next one here shows abundance composite index, and this is comprised of the survey data. The abundance index did trigger in 2014 with a mean red proportion of 43.5 percent. Overall management measures weren't triggered, and that is because you need both harvest and the abundance index to be over that 30 percent threshold. There is no trigger for management action at this point. In terms of the status of management, we're currently under the Omnibus Amendment, but there are no specific regulations in that for the recreational or commercial sector.

Then we have Addendum I, which stipulates the Traffic Light Approach. All states are found to

be in compliance. For de minimis, state qualifies for de minimis if its past three year average of combined commercial and recreational catch is less than 1 percent of the coastwide average. Georgia requested and qualifies for de minimis status. The PRT recommends the board approve the 2015 Spot FMP Review State Compliance Reports and de minimis status for Georgia.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Are there any questions for Megan?

**DR. LOUIS B. DANIEL: No sir, I was just going to make a motion that we approve the 2015 review, the State Compliance Report and de minimis status for Georgia.**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Let's make sure there are no questions; any questions? Okay and Pat seconds the motion; any discussion about the motion? The motion is to approve the 2015 Spot FMP Review, State Compliance Reports and de minimis status for Georgia. Motion by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Pat Geer.

MR. PAT GEER: I'm glittered by that; because we're both from the same state and we both went to the same college. But it's Mr. Geer.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: **Are there any objections to the motion? Seeing none; it passes unanimously.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ISFMP POLICY BOARD REGARDING SPOTTED SEA TROUT MANAGEMENT**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Okay, the next item is about spotted sea trout. If you remember in our meeting in November, 2015 we made the recommendation, we passed a motion that said that we were going to recommend to the policy board to withdraw the spotted sea trout FMP. Since that time it has come to our attention that there were some unforeseen consequences of doing that. With that I will let Louis talk about that.

DR. DANIEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am sorry for jumping the gun on that at the last meeting. I was unaware of some changes that had been made at home that actually removed my proclamation authority from being able to re-implement the management measures without the federal or ASMFC Plan Nexus.

It would have actually defeated the whole purpose of my intent at least, in trying to get the board to take that action. In the meantime we're working towards restoring that proclamation authority for me with spotted sea trout. But at this present time I think it would be in our best interest to wait until such time that those changes have been made; particularly so that we don't negatively impact number one, our fishery but also Virginia's fishery is what really concerned me about that.

There was some suggestion about perhaps moving forward with an addendum to perhaps modify some of the current restrictions on spotted sea trout. In thinking about that and talking to some people, I wonder if that would draw more attention to this than we really want to, Number 1, and Number 2, there are so many issues and things in the various states that really the only thing I could really see that we might be able to do is move forward with an increase in the size limit to be consistent with the smaller size limits we have; which I believe would be 14 inches. But I'm not sure that really gets us much bang for the buck. My suggestion at this point, whether we need a motion or not, would simply be to table this issue until we're able to sort through all the issues that I'm dealing with at home.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Are there questions to Louis about this issue or any comments?

DR. WILSON LANEY: I had committed at the last meeting to take a look at spotted sea trout tagging studies with a view toward showing or determining how much interjurisdictional migration that they exhibited, and those are on the order of 5 to 8 percent. It is pretty low, and most of those are between adjacent states like

North Carolina/Virginia or South Carolina/North Carolina.

It is fairly low. I did vote in favor of the motion last time for biological reasons, because they do show a lot of fidelity to their natal estuaries. Then I had talked to Louis and wondered whether or not an addendum just to raise the size limit to 14 inches would be a useful approach to take. But I understand that Delaware still has I guess the 12 inch size limit in place; which is what is presently in the ASMFC plan.

The only thing I'll add is that if you did decide to pursue an addendum. I can't remember, maybe Megan can help me, whether or not we updated the spotted sea trout habitat section when we did that Omnibus Amendment for other South Atlantic State federal species. If we didn't, then if we were to pursue an addendum it would probably be a useful thing to update that habitat section of that plan.

MS. WARE: Yes, give me one second to look through that plan and I can respond to that Wilson.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: In the meantime are there other questions, Robert.

MR. ROBERT H. BOYLES JR. No question, Mr. Chairman; bunker, but a comment, pogeey, and then finally let me throw in menhaden just for good measure. I certainly understand Louis' intention, both in terms of making the original motion as well as the situation he finds himself in. Based on among other things the information Wilson has just shared with us, I think long term I am very interested in decoupling to the degree that we could, this very parochial species as we see it.

I will just say for the board's information. We've been approached by some of our constituents back home to really kind of take a long term look at spotted sea trout. Back in the fall we had a constituent said – you know the guy had been fishing for seventy years – it's a

game fish in South Carolina so there are no reported commercial landings.

His point was; what is now a trophy fish would have been a throwaway back in the early days of his youth. It has really caused us to look at really long term visioning; what we want that spotted sea trout fishery to look like. Love dancing with you, don't get me wrong, but if we have the opportunity to go on our own and maybe develop a trophy fishery, or look at some of the innovative mechanisms that are being used to manage that fishery from around, really the southeast; that we would like that opportunity. I certainly don't object to holding off on where we're going, but I think long term we would be interested in being able to perform more solo act with spotted sea trout management; menhaden.

MS. WARE: Wilson, just to answer your question. There is, it looks like it is a pretty detailed habitat section in the document now. It goes over the habitat of the different life stages and critical habitat. That was from 2012.

DR. DANIEL: I would just ask if the other members of the board have a similar feeling about this issue as Robert does, because I certainly agree with what you're saying, certainly would like to do the same thing. That would help me move this along quicker and maybe try to get something in to the short session based on some studies that I've got to report on in the next couple of months.

I might be able to get that moving quicker if there is a general interest. I know there is still the issue with Delaware. I don't know how to deal with that issue. But aside from that specific issue, did most of the board members feel the same way as Robert? Because if they do that helps me.

DR. LANEY: Well not to that point. Another possible reason for tabling it now, as I understand, Louis you may want to address this, but I think there is a new genetic study that is going to be done that might shed some more



light on differences between spotted sea trout along the coast. Some of the previous studies suggested that there were some significant genetic differences between, at least the stocks in the Carolinas I guess or North Carolina maybe and some of the southern stocks.

I would just say to the point that Robert was making, with regard to management. I think this particular species is very similar to the anadromous species in that management for them probably ought to be at least estuary based. From that perspective it is a very appropriate species for state-based management.

Then one last comment is that I would encourage us all to consider, in addition to the things we've already talked about with regard to plan withdrawal, whether or not there would be any other reason to keep it in place. I don't know, from an enforcement perspective is there some utility to having a statewide plan in place? Because some of the issues you could address through an addendum; others you might not be able to. I would just encourage us all to think about that too.

MR. GEER: Louis, we were very supportive of you. In fact Georgia just increased their size limit to 14 inches, and in the public hearing there seemed like there was going to be a lot of opposition and there really wasn't. There was just a lot of noise. Most people were supportive. What a lot of people were saying afterwards though, they would almost like to see a slot limit.

What that slot limit would be, we don't know. Taking it off the commission's purview, you know we're working very closely with southern flounder. You came to the board and we are working very closely with everybody. It seems to be going along fairly smoothly, and we're going to have probably a stock assessment on that at some point. I agree with what everyone has said so far, we should move forward with this.

MR. JOE CIMINO: As I said in November, I am most comfortable with this since we have been working with North Carolina and Virginia has a part in that joint stock assessment. I think going forward as long as the two states are working together. As Wilson pointed out there are some genetic studies trying to get to, even with the mixed stock is there site fidelity to these estuaries. But either way I think as long as the two of us are working together that really gets to it.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I'm a little confused. Listening to what Robert said that they're contemplating some perhaps innovative methods for managing their spotted sea trout population. I don't understand why the South Atlantic Plan for spotted sea trout, what advantage there would be to doing away with that. As everyone knows well, you can be more restrictive but not less restrictive than a plan; and frankly the plan isn't very restrictive now. What are the advantages to abandoning the Spotted Sea Trout Plan to pursue the type of thing that Robert had in mind?

MR. BOYLES: Roy, it is not so much an advantage of abandoning this group dance, as much as it is kind of a long term issue; I think quite frankly of credibility. Where does the commission spend its resources in terms of managing interstate fisheries, with the information that Wilson just provided?

We intend to move forward with this look and this analysis and this discussion with our recreational anglers on spotted sea trout. Quite confident that we won't come back with anything, if anything we intend to be probably a little bit more restrictive. With the rains that we had, the flooding that many of you all saw reported back in the fall. It has been an epic spotted sea trout year in South Carolina.

But having said that I think people have seen that wow, this fishery can really be different. My interest is in simply not specific to spotted sea trout, but the question of if this is a parochial fish, to use my term, if this is a

parochial fish why are we spending commission resources managing it; that's all. It's not an objection. I just think it is a question of, are we better served by spending our time and our efforts on species that may be a little less parochial like eels and like red drum and some of these other species where there are clear connections across state borders.

DR. DANIEL: I would just remind, we talked about this the last time. But I guess my biggest concern and the reason that I brought this up in the very first place, was the concern about being more restrictive than the federal government. That is a position that my state is taking on many issues. My main concern was in making sure that I wasn't all of a sudden told, you can't be more restrictive than the ASMFC Plan, which only requires a 12 inch minimum size limit.

If we were required to do that then it would be devastating to the North Carolina and Virginia population. I don't know that it would affect the southern states much at all, just based on all the tagging work we've done. There is very little interchange south of North Carolina, but there is a lot into Virginia; and so that was the biggest concern. While I recognize that there is an issue in another state, I think the potential for North Carolina having to go back to the original plan requirements would be devastating to the resource and that is my primary concern.

DR. LANEY: Well, it is a fine point I suppose. The ASMFC Plan is not a federal plan. I don't know that that would be perceived that way by the public. I see Louis nodding in assent. The courts have determined that ASMFC is not a federal entity, so the plan isn't federal and it isn't subject to Section 7 consultations and other things like that. But to that point, I still think that the solution may be, at least as far as the size limit thing goes, would be just to put an addendum in place that addressed that size limit issue. Again that doesn't solve Delaware's problem at all.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Right now we are scheduled I believe tomorrow to talk about this at the Policy Board, unless we take some sort of action here today. I would suggest that probably we do need a motion if we're going to delay.

**MR. BOYLE: Mr. Chairman, having voted on the prevailing side at the annual meeting to recommend that the Policy Board rescind the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spotted Sea Trout, I would move that we – menhaden help me out – I would move that we table the motion.**

MS. TONI KERNS: Postpone.

**MR. BOYLE: Postpone, thank you Ms. Kerns, postpone the motion that was passed in November, 2015 to withdraw the spotted sea trout FMP.**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Are we going to have some time certain on the postponement?

MR. BOYLE: Mr. Chairman, Joe's not here. It is my intent to postpone this indefinitely to give some of our jurisdictions time to wrestle with this. That is the reason it's a motion to postpone and not a motion to table.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Any discussion on the motion? Louis second; any discussion?

MR. BOYLE: Mr. Chairman I think point of order. I believe this will require two-thirds vote.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: I would have to look to Toni about that whether that is true or not.

MS. KERNS: You've stumped me, because you're not rescinding the action you've postponed it indefinitely, which is like rescinding but using it differently. But we could just to be safe, if you wanted to. I need Dennis.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Any more discussion before we figure out what we're doing here? Okay I kind of sense that maybe there is not complete

consensus on this issue. Without any further discussion, those in favor of the motion raise their right hand please. Thank you, abstentions, and null votes.

**Maybe I should ask, how about any nays, raise your right hand please. Okay I have motion passes 11 to 0 to 0 to 0. I think we have our two-thirds majority whether we need it or not.**

#### **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: The next item that we have on our agenda is election of Vice-Chair. Right now that position is empty. Do we have any nominations for Vice-Chair?

**MR. GEER: I would like to nominate Dr. Louis Daniel of North Carolina as our new Vice-Chair of the South Atlantic Board.**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Do we have a second? I have a second from Malcolm. Are there any objections for Louis serving as a Vice-Chair? Seeing none; Louis welcome to the South Atlantic Board again.

DR. DANIEL: Thank you; red drum.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Is there any other business before the board today? Yes, Michelle.

DR. MICHELLE DUVAL: Besides being Louis' proxy on a couple management boards here, one of the other hats I wear is Chair of the South Atlantic Council. I just wanted to bring to the boards attention, I guess an issue that everyone is going to be having with cobia. I just wanted to let folks know the South Atlantic is the management lead for cobia along the east coast.

There were some changes to cobia management beginning in late 2015. The management unit used to be the east coast of Florida through New York, but genetic work done during the latest stock assessment indicated that the stock boundary between the

Gulf and Atlantic stocks of cobia was actually at the Florida/Georgia border, so right now the Atlantic Coast cobia stock and ACL applies to that area from Georgia north through New York.

For folks who fished for cobia over the past year you know that it was pretty much an epic year for cobia. The ACL for that species, it was an epic year recreationally for cobia, the recreational ACL for that species is 630,000 pounds. We blew it by almost double. It was 1.5 million pounds. The accountability measures for that species on the recreational side do not include an in-season closure when the ACL is met or projected to be met.

Instead, the Fisheries Service calculates the length by which the following year's season might need to be reduced in order to constrain harvest to the ACL. It is pretty clear to those of us around the South Atlantic Council table, we had a lengthy discussion about this at our December council meeting; that there is going to be a shortened season for cobia.

I don't know when the last time was we had a shortened season for cobia. The South Atlantic Council is going to be considering a regulatory amendment to lower the bag limit from two fish to one fish; it has been two fish for a number of years. I know that other states and jurisdictions; I believe the east coast of Florida has had a one fish cobia limit in state waters for a while.

Virginia went to; I think a one fish limit in April of 2014. I think there were a number of factors that led to this. The average size of the fish, if you take a look at the preliminary MRIP data was almost 10 pounds higher than it was in 2014. I just say that because I know that this is a really important recreational fishery for many charter and for-hire captains.

Robert, I neglected to include South Carolina. I know you all have some legislation moving through as well to reduce the bag limit I think for one of your subpopulations to one fish as

well. We've asked our staff in North Carolina to conduct a similar analysis to see how North Carolina, moving down to one fish limit might impact the length of the season for this year.

Preliminary indications were that most people don't limit out on cobia, so a one fish limit isn't necessarily going to do a whole lot. But I wanted to bring that to folk's attention. One of the big things here is that I think if you look at the two separate ACLs for the east coast of Florida and then for the remainder of the Atlantic Coast. The Georgia through New York portion of the ACL has kind of gone up and down, and alternately exceeded and been under our new ACL over the years if you look at those landings. Really the big players in that fishery are North Carolina and Virginia. Virginia tapped everybody in 2015 with harvest, and it tends to be mostly a Wave 3 fishery for most folks.

Virginia also has a significant chunk of harvest in Wave 4. John Carmichael is here from the South Atlantic Council. John, I don't know if there is anything else you might want to add. I think that sort of encapsulates our conversation from December, but I did just want to make folks aware of it. Thank you.

MR. JOHN CARMICHAEL: No, I don't have anything else to add, Michelle. I think you did a great job in covering it. Thanks.

MR. BOYLES: Question for Michelle, and then a comment. Michelle, the fishing year is the calendar year, correct? Just for the board's information. Today the South Carolina Senate Committee on Fish, Game and Forestry, a member of whom Ronnie Cromer is the Legislative Commissioner, has passed legislation on to the South Carolina Senate floor that would create a southern cobia management zone in South Carolina state waters south of 32 degrees, 31 minutes.

Within that southern cobia management zone the possession limit from June 1st through April 30th would be one fish per person, three fish

per boat. During the month of May it would be no possession allowed at all. Michelle, I know that this is based on some genetic work that our staff found that was accepted as part of the latest stock assessment. There is a very unique fishery, inshore fishery in South Carolina. The House of Representatives in South Carolina has also passed similar measures.

Both of those bills are on the way to the floor, and we are optimistic and hopeful that they will pass. But it will raise the question of whether those fish that are caught inside get counted against that coastwise DPS, and something that we're very, very concerned about; again in terms of trying to keep that fishery open. Last I'll mention in South Carolina, cobia caught in South Carolina state waters may not be sold, bartered trade or otherwise enter commerce; they are game fish.

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Any questions for John or Michelle, or further discussion on this issue?

DR. DANIEL: Yes this came as a little bit of a surprise to me, because of all the fish that we manage, we've been very conservative all along with cobia with a two fish limit for both commercial and recreational fisheries where commercial fisheries exist. It is concerning to me that we're seeing this type of thing, especially with the increasing size and the size limits that we currently have.

But I am concerned about the impacts of this closure, really as much for the north of North Carolina particularly Virginia. If you're looking at a June 15th closure, that is a major chunk of the Virginia fishery. A lot of times our fishery is slowing down by the end, but I would imagine that is a pretty hefty hit for north of North Carolina. It is disappointing; I guess is the most thing I can say about it. I certainly would encourage us to continue to try to collect as much information as we possibly can for an updated stock assessment, because there has got to be something. I would think that maybe more information might help us out of this fix.

MR. CIMINO: It has been a growing in popularity recreational fishery for us. Just to correct Michelle. We've had the one fish recreational bag limit for a long time. It is a two fish commercial. Slowing that fishery down isn't going to be easy. The only further discussions that our recreational guys have been having, is having a boat limit; capping it at 6 or 4 fish per boat. There certainly hasn't been any talk about a season, but we have let them know that Virginia alone more than doubled the ACL for Georgia through New York, so definitely something's coming.

DR. DUVAL: Not to belabor this, but I think the reason that this is a big surprise is that previously Florida was lumped in with the rest of the states, so you had all of that additional ACL, and now it has been determined that Florida is fishing on the Gulf stock as opposed to the Atlantic population, so that removes a huge chunk.

If you look at the ACL for Florida, Florida's cobia harvest has been reasonably under, maybe 20 to 30 percent almost every year of the ACL that they have now. Again, because of these changes in the stock boundaries this is why we're in this pickle. Trust me; we don't want to be here.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIRMAN ESTES: Anything else on this issue? Seeing none; is there any other business that we need to discuss? Hearing silence, is there a motion to adjourn; Pat, and a second? Malcolm. We're adjourned.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 3:35 o'clock p.m. on February 3, 2016.)