

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel Atlantic Beach, North Carolina

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD

November 29, 2000

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ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel Atlantic Beach, North Carolina

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE-FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD

November 29, 2000

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Attendance

Board Members:

Susan Shipman, GA DNR, Chair

Bill Cole, USFWS

Dr. Louis Daniel, NC DMF, proxy for Preston Pate

Wayne Lee, proxy for Damon Tatem, NC Gov. Appte.

Bob Mahood, SAFMC

Roy Williams, FL FWC

Dr. Joe Powers, NMFS

Ex-Officio Members:

Capt. Homer Bryson, GA

Other Commissioners:

None

Advisory Panel Members:

N/A

Staff:

Dr. Joseph Desfosse, ASMFC

Geoff White, ASMFC

Guests:

Columbus Brown, USFWS

Roger Pugliese, SAFMC

There may have been others in attendance who did not sign the attendance sheet.

South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board

November 29, 2000

SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

1. *Move to approve the agenda as reordered.*

Motion by Dr. Daniel, second by Mr. Cole. Motion carries with no objections.

2. *Move to accept scenarios two and three under the shallow water trawl survey and fund the additional biologist for collection of age and growth and reproductive data for high priority fishes.*

Motion by Dr. Daniel, seconded by Mr. Williams. Motion carries by voice vote.

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE-FEDERAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel Atlantic Beach, North Carolina

November 29, 2000

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The South Atlantic State-Federal Fishery Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Pamlico/Hatteras Room of the Sheraton Atlantic Beach Hotel, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, November 29, 2000, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Susan Shipman.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Shipman: I'd like to call everybody to the table, if I could, please? We're going to convene the meeting of the South Atlantic State-Federal Fishery Management Board. I'd like to welcome everyone. Everyone should have an agenda, if you would refer to your agenda, please. We have extra copies of the agenda. Is there anyone that doesn't have one? Okay, it appears everybody has one. Just for the record, we do have a quorum.

For our visitors, the members of the South Atlantic Board are the State Commission Delegations, Commissioners from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida. The South Atlantic Council is on the South Atlantic Board, represented by Bob Mahood, and we have the Fish and Wildlife Service who is on the board. Bill Cole is the representative. And then we have the National Marine Fisheries Service who's also on the Board, and that's Dr. Powers, I think. And then Wayne Lee is the proxy for Damon Tatem. The others that could not be with us today, I know the North Carolina delegation, several of them are up in Providence, so that's why we don't have some of our other commissioners. So again, welcome, we appreciate everybody coming.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

You've had a chance to look at the agenda. I would entertain a motion to approve the agenda. I would just like to note under Item 5 on the SEAMAP update, which will be the first thing we will take up, the order of the those four items that you see there, we're going to take the presentation of the Trawl Survey Review first. We'd like to do the review and approval of the SEAMAP South Atlantic Committee recommendations second, and then do a presentation of the Data

Management Web Page and Data Access Items; and then fourth, which would be moved down, would be approval of the 2001-05 Management Plan. We're actually going to recommend deferring action on that, but there are a couple of priority items we need to discuss there. So with that, Bill Cole?

Mr. Cole: I have a small SEAMAP item to do, so if you wouldn't mind adding to that at the very end, I'd appreciate it.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, so you have another SEAMAP item that we'll add under the SEAMAP update? Okay, any other changes, additions, revisions, reordering? Okay, is there a motion to approve the revised agenda?

Dr. Daniel: **So move.**

Ms. Shipman: We have a motion by Louis Daniel; a **second by Bill Cole.** Further discussion on the agenda? Is there any objection to approval of the revised agenda? **Seeing no objection, the agenda is approved as reordered.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Okay the next item, approval of the minutes, I'll just let Joe tell us the status of those. We don't have them for you today, but we will.

Dr. Desfosse: That's the status. I don't know what else I can say; I just haven't had the time.

Ms. Shipman: No, and I'm not trying to put Joe on the spot here. With all due respect to Joe, this Board is one of the few that does not regularly have the services of a transcriber. We're hoping to remedy that, and we're very blessed to have Joe Graham with us this morning taking our minutes. We're going to try to make that a regular practice because it's very difficult on the staff of the Commission, who are servicing a number of other plans and meetings during a meeting, to take care of the minutes as well. So, we're going to try to remedy that. We apologize that they're not ready but they will be. And it's not because Joe hasn't been working very hard on other things.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Okay, public comment, it's the routine practice of the Atlantic States Commission to entertain public comment at the beginning of our agendas. Are there any items anyone from the public would like to bring to our attention? We also would welcome public input and comment as we go along through the meeting also. Is there anyone from the public that would like to make a comment or bring any issues to the Board?

Okay, seeing none, again, I would just invite you to, as we go along, raise your hand if you would like to make any comments on any of these items. Okay, I'm going to turn it over now to Geoff White, who is the SEAMAP South Atlantic Coordinator, and let him lead us through the agenda items.

SEAMAP UPDATE

Mr. White: Thank you, Susan. I just wanted to start off with thanks for having me here today, as well as a slight apology for the confusion in some of the documents that have been handed out. We just learned as of, I think it was October 30/November 1st, that there's a bump in the SEAMAP money; going up 200,000 dollars in the congressional, not yet approved, budgets. And because of that, we actually held work group meetings or conference calls for all four of the work groups. The Committees have talked twice.

And so some of these documents, I didn't have much time to prepare, but we'll try and reduce confusion here today. I just want to start off -- the first handout, which is the SEAMAP South Atlantic update, I just wanted to focus on the first page of that for a second. It's the one that's stapled at the bottom that was just handed out. That's just kind of one of our quick standard summaries of what meetings we've held, reports that are completed. The fall SEAMAP trawl cruise has been completed, and that report should be out within the next month.

We have had, as I said, meetings of all of the work groups and the Committee and conference calls within the last month. So that's just a quick summary.

The first major item on our agenda today is just a discussion of the external review of the trawl survey. This was done by Mike Fogarty, and it was included in the e-mail that went out to the Board. It is not in the handouts that went out this morning. Just to summarize a few of the reasons for the trawl review and then what the work group has come out of that. The Committee initially wanted to know are we using the resources correctly for the trawl survey.

We've now had ten years of consistent sampling and the program has reached its maturity and a point where the data is really usable in assessments. They wanted to know if the outer strata were meeting their

objectives, the inner strata order were meeting their objectives, and is there a way that, given limited funding, we could use the money better within the trawl program?

The first term of reference was to evaluate the overall sampling design. I'm actually going to come back to that. The second one was to evaluate the utility of the outer strata. The way the trawl program works is there are 24 inner strata that are sampled on three different cruises every year. The outer strata were originally designed to collect reproductive information on shrimp. They're only towed once a year in the southern portion off of Georgia and Florida. The outer strata are a depth zone of 30 to 60 feet.

They're trawled only in the spring, on the spring cruise. The summer cruise, no outer strata are sampled. And then in the fall, there are outer strata off of North Carolina that are sampled. In terms of their original objective to collect shrimp reproductive information, they have not done that. Mike Fogarty's review notes that. They've been interested in collection of other species, however. But, because the variability is higher, they're only towed once a year, and it's much more difficult to use them in the analysis.

The question that came up with the work group is overall the trawl review basically said that in the reports that he was given, there wasn't enough information to say whether or not the outer strata were data rich enough to keep. They really weren't reported on very much and so the question that came up is -- the final recommendation was to drop the outer strata. The question was is the recommendation to drop them because they're not useful or because we're not reporting on them and they're not being used?

So, the work group needs to do a little bit more analysis of that. But Jeannie Boylan, the head of the trawl survey, every year, every cruise, does take a look at the outer strata when they're towed and basically has not reported on them because there has been nothing interesting or nothing different from the inner strata.

All of the ten-year analyses and indices that are used in stock assessments all come from the inner strata. So, the recommendation from the work group and the committee is to no longer collect the outer strata. That was actually made as a budgetary decision in August. And the South Atlantic Board approved that in August based on limited money. As new monies come up, they basically looked at it and said did we want to reinstate those outer strata, and the answer is no. The recommendation is not to do that. It's about \$16,000 to collect those and the data has not been useful. That's why it wasn't reported and that's basically supported by the review.

Relative to the overall sampling design of the trawl

survey, Mike Fogarty was supportive of the allocation method, which is basically the stations are allocated by area within strata, but did note that in reports there is no estimate of variability that goes along with the reports. That's something that the work group is going to add. The main point that he was on in sampling design is there's too much variation within the inner strata; and to reduce that, we really need more stations within the inner strata.

That's the recommendation that's coming from the South Atlantic Committee. That is in the funding document when we get to it. But the trawl work group met on Monday. In their desire to allocate the stations, there's still a question left in terms of how to allocate those stations to reduce variations in the estimates. The stations that are towed off of North Carolina and Florida have about twice the variance of the stations that are towed off of -- or the strata that are towed off of South Carolina and Georgia.

A lot of that is due to there are fewer stations within those strata. They're a smaller area in terms of bottom and there's more difficulty finding locations where they can pull the trawl. But by increasing the number of stations towed off of North Carolina and Florida in the inner strata, we could basically improve the estimates so that they're all about the same.

Ms. Shipman: We have a couple of questions.

Mr. Lee: Could you explain to me when you say twice the variance; I didn't quite understand that? What does that mean when you say twice the variance between North Carolina and Florida compared to Georgia and South Carolina?

Mr. White: It's the average or the mean value for catch per tow. If it was five fish plus or minus three fish over ten years, that plus or minus three fish is the variance. Basically, if the average was five and it was plus or minus three fish off of South Carolina, it would be plus or minus six fish off of North Carolina. So, basically, you may get the same average point, but you're not sure how far above or below that point you are. And by improving the variance, you can actually say we have more confidence in that single average that we're saying is the datapoint.

Dr. Daniel: Geoff, didn't you say that the variance in South Carolina and Georgia was greater, or the variance in North Carolina and Florida is greater?

Mr. White: The variability in the data is greater for North Carolina and Florida, and that's because there are fewer stations towed. Because they take fewer samples, there are more changes between them.

If we increase the number of datapoints off of North Carolina and Florida, it'll improve the quality of the data, so it's about the same for the whole range. So the work group recommends dropping the outer strata

and adding some stations to the inner strata. However, they statistically are asking for a little bit of help.

Ms. Shipman: From us?

Mr. White: Not specifically from this group, but they are in need of kind of a statistical consult; maybe not to do all of the work but at least to help out with the protocols and tests to run to determine the best way to reallocate stations before the spring 2001 cruise.

Their question to the Board is, is there a South Atlantic Council Statistics Committee or a person that we could coordinate with? They didn't really have a good idea of where to go for the outside help. And the question was is there someone within this body that could help out with this?

Ms. Shipman: You mean within the Board or within the Council?

Mr. White: Within the Council. Is there an appropriate committee to look to or is this better served as just a direct phone call to an individual?

Ms. Shipman: I mean, these are just my thoughts --

Mr. White: And this is brand new. I'm sorry, this just happened Monday.

Ms. Shipman: No, I think it's better served going with some calls to some individuals; sort of the same way we're trying to handle some of the data analysis on the pilot socioeconomic survey. I mean I don't -- we've already convened our SSC.

I don't know when they're going to be convening again. We've already approached Arvind Shah about something else for the Commission. He didn't have time to do it. I don't think there are any resources within the Council to do this. But these are just my thoughts.

Mr. Williams: You said exactly what I was going to say. I think you just have to select the right individuals within the states or the National Marine Fisheries Service. Who's on this Committee that met that's asking this?

Mr. White: Jeannie Boylan, who is the head of the trawl survey; from Georgia, we have Dwayne Roberson; North Carolina is Katie West. Shawn McKenna filled in for her at this particular meeting. And for the trawl worker we don't have anybody from Florida at this time.

Dr. Powers: Are you looking for a contractor, a statistical consultant, or are you looking for a freebie?

Mr. White: Right now we really don't have anything in the budget to pay to contract a statistical consult. We were kind of looking for some help and direction from one of the state or federal agencies. But I think that's enough direction. They did bring up a few names that were possible. We'll just go ahead and contact them directly and try and work this out.

Mr. Williams: Is that retired statistics professor

from North Carolina still on the SSC? I can't remember his name.

Ms. Shipman: Dr. Haine.

Mr. Williams: Haine, yes, is he?

Mr. Cole: Let me see if I can understand. Exactly what is it we're looking for?

Ms. Shipman: What we're looking for is an analysis, I think, of the existing inner strata sampling protocol to see what is the best way to expand that to decrease the variability to increase your confidence.

My suggestion -- and this is just a suggestion -- is go back to the state of South Carolina. They're the ones who administer and operate the shallow water trawl survey. I think they have statistical expertise in house. And I would suggest Jeannie consult with them and see what they can come up with and maybe run it by Mike Fogarty, if he's the one that did the review. That's just a suggestion.

Dr. Daniel: I would agree with that assessment. Certainly, they have a good handle on that survey and that program. And that's likely the reason why you've got so many stations off South Carolina and Georgia.

And we can work with them. You know, our group can work with them to try to come up some ideas for off North Carolina as well, but I certainly think South Carolina should take the lead on it.

Mr. White: We can do that. The reason there are more stations off of South Carolina and Georgia is because the depth zone from zero to 30 feet is actually at a greater area. And when the survey was designed in the late '80s, they allocated the station based on area of bottom for those strata that were available to trawl in the shallow water.

And off of North Carolina, there are a lot of zones that are closed because of unexploited ordinance and a few places that they can actually trawl. And off of Florida, again, there are very few places where they're able to pull the trawl down to Cape Canaveral.

Mr. Brown: Have you consulted with the U.S. Geological Survey about possible help with the statistical analysis?

Mr. White: We've not, but that's a good suggestion.

Mr. Brown: Okay, the Caribbean Science Center, or I can get in touch with Mike Vandenaal who oversees the co-op units.

Mr. White: That's exactly what we were looking for, thank you.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, thank you. Well, I think we've got guidance for the Shallow Water Trawl Work Group and Geoff will take that back for us. And just sort of summarizing the recommendations to us is to affirm dropping the outer strata and recommending the increase in the inner strata, and we will, I guess, make

the final decision on that when we take up the funding item.

Mr. White: Yes. Still on the trawl review, this is more of a note than an action item, the SEAMAP Committee and South Atlantic Board have been working on developing priorities for the 2001-2005 management plan.

A lot of those priorities in terms of adding projects, age and growth, trophic interactions, habitat, ecological considerations, all of those things were supported by Fogarty's review; basically saying that as an open data need and a platform to collect this type of data, his exact words were, "Marginal costs of collecting age, reproductive and food habits data while at sea are low because the boat is already out there".

You know, processing costs shoreside would be the consideration. But when money is available, those are things that the committee and Board has already come up with as high priority items. And those were the exact things that Mike Fogarty came up with on his own to support for the trawl survey. So we're on the right track. That wraps up the trawl review item.

Ms. Shipman: Then I think our next item is the Committee's recommendations, which are behind the very first sheet that's stapled at the bottom.

Mr. White: Yes, Page 2 has the table on it with the different projects and three different scenarios. Pages 2, 3 and 4 are the description of the South Atlantic Committee's priorities for funding in the year 2001, to use the \$200,000 increase that SEAMAP has received.

Previously, we've kind of set items in terms of restoration activities, enhancement activities and then addition of new projects. And with this new money, all of these activities for the projects in dollars here would be considered restoration activities.

These are recovering losses or having the ability to run the program as it was designed, but has been kind of scaled back because we've not had a funding increase in six years. So, operational costs have caused us to have fewer nets than we should and things like that.

Dr. Daniel: Let me make sure I'm clear here. The proposal in front of us here is to account for the budget increases?

Mr. White: Yes.

Dr. Daniel: How we're going to account for that from our share of the money that has to be split between the Gulf, Caribbean and South Atlantic?

Ms. Shipman: Right.

Mr. White: Exactly.

Dr. Daniel: We have expanded SEAMAP map activities --

Mr. White: That's the five-year wish list.

Dr. Daniel: Right. Now, what I'm confused about I guess, is, one, it doesn't look like the biological data

collection need is going to be addressed at this particular time I guess because of the money shortfalls or whatever, right?

Mr. White: That's correct.

Ms. Shipman: But that's up to us today to either affirm and adopt the recommendations of the various work groups these scenarios here or to pick up something else that's in that five-year plan.

Dr. Daniel: Okay, so do we want to have discussion on that now or later?

Ms. Shipman: Yes, well, let's let Geoff sort of lay out what the recommendation from the committee is and then we can discuss that and revise that recommendation, affirm it, or whatever.

Mr. White: That sounds good. Knowing that there's a set amount of money, the \$200,000, that needs to be distributed between the Gulf, South Atlantic and Caribbean, the way these scenarios are laid out from the work groups was what are their priorities? What do they need to really function at their level that they'd prefer? Scenario one is if we could restore our programs to full utilization, this is what it would cost. \$147,000 is not realistic for what the South Atlantic is going to get out of that \$200,000.

Right now, we don't know how that's going to get split up. The two non-controversial ways to split that \$200,000; one would be an equal split between components. That would leave the South Atlantic with about \$60,000.

The other would be to split it proportionately as SEAMAP funds have been split proportionately for a long time. The Gulf would get more, the Caribbean would get less, the South Atlantic would stay at about \$65,000.

So the two non-controversial options, in terms of splitting that \$200,000, put us at about 60 to 65,000. The Joint Committee Chairs, which for the South Atlantic is Henry Ansley; and at the Caribbean is Barbara Cogiss; and for the Gulf is Dick Waller, are going to have a conference call in the middle of December to actually split that money and figure out how that's going to go.

But from the South Atlantic perspective, we really have tried to do our homework and say what are our most critical needs? What's our wish list? What do we want to ask for, and what's the minimum that we can accept? And that's really what this agenda item is about.

Mr. Mahood: Now this is all new money here?

Mr. White: Yes.

Mr. Mahood: Is there any way we have information to what's being spent on each one of those with the --

Mr. White: Projects currently? I apologize for not

getting that out to you, but I can let you know.

Mr. Mahood: Okay, as we go through it -- do you have it with you for your own information?

Mr. White: These are additional items. What the South Atlantic Committee has approved for the 2001 budget; the historical South Atlantic component is \$285,000. What they approved for 2001 is zero for bottom mapping; approximately \$225,000 for South Carolina, which goes to the trawl survey collections.

And that does not include sampling the outer strata. Those were cut because of a budget decision and then supported by the trawl review. But that does not include the collections for the outer strata. They had a vessel increase, their first one in terms of daily costs. It was the first increase in seven or eight years, and so that was kind of due.

So we've got \$230,000 going to the trawl survey, zero for bottom mapping, and the remainder of the money goes to the ASMFC, which pays half of my salary, and is currently for only the Joint Committee meeting. The work group meetings that are on here would be additional. They're not currently budgeted for. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Mahood: Yes, because it's kind of de javu. Wasn't it the last meeting we discussed the additional needs, because this seems to fall in -- I think we've been through this one time.

Ms. Shipman: Well, what we did, in June we went through sort of a five-year plan. Yes, and that laid out the current funding and we had to affirm what we wanted to do with this year's grant money, which was basically maintain the shallow water trawl survey. But we had cut out the outer strata, but we did lay out restoration expansion.

Mr. Mahood: Yes, because we had it laid out dollar-wise, as I recall, to increase vessel costs, the exact amount for equipment and this type of thing. So did we, at that point in time make -- didn't we make some decisions at that point in time or at least give directions?

Mr. White: You did make recommendations and basically support the five-year priorities. Then what happened at the last few days of October, as we said, we have a specific amount of money that's coming to SEAMAP.

And we've gone through a lot of work to say, okay, given \$200,000, not given what your wish list what would you do, but given \$200,000, what are your specific priorities and what actual projects do you want to fund within that?

And I apologize for the confusion. One is what do we want to do for five years? And the other is, and this item is specifically, what do we want to do for 2001? We've got \$200,000, but that needs to be split.

Ms. Shipman: And what we did in June, we affirmed the document and restoration of the current project to full utilization was our top priority. Everything they presented to us is considered a restoration. But there's not enough money to do the whole menu.

Mr. White: At the bottom of Page 2, it just says work group meetings. Those are standard across all three scenarios. If we're going to fund some of these work groups in terms of project dollars, they do need to actually get together and talk about what they're doing.

Those are relatively minor costs that add up to a total of about \$9,000 for the work group meetings. Specifically for the shallow water trawl, this is on Page 3 --

Dr. Daniel: I'm sorry, I really am. I'm trying to follow this here, but it looks like to me we've got 60 to \$65,000 to spend.

Ms. Shipman: We do.

Dr. Daniel: We've got three scenarios that range from 83 to 147. It seems like to me that all we can do is one of these projects. It seems to me that it's sort of a given that the need to do the shallow water trawl expansion is where we need to be going here. I guess I don't understand why were discussing all these scenarios, 1, 2 and 3 when we only have \$65,000 to spend.

Ms. Shipman: Well, Louis let's let --

Mr. White: The other option would be to try and work jointly to come up with more than \$65,000 for the South Atlantic because of their needs. What I haven't gotten to yet is the justification and the reasons for some of these data-collection activities, and I was about to get there.

Mr. Mahood: And if we have good justification, when Henry gets going on his conference call, he can maybe get more money? I mean, is that even a remote possibility?

Ms. Shipman: And there's some possibility of leveraging some of the money we would propose with some other money. I think Geoff is going to talk about that.

Mr. White: Right. With the trawl program, the recommendations that have already been made in terms of dropping the outer strata and adding stations to the inner strata, that is their top priority. That would increase the sampling effort by about 30 percent for less than a 10 percent increase in cost. That's about \$20,000 to improve the quality of the data for the trawl survey. Right now they use electronic measuring boards. It makes their work go a lot faster. They have two that are about five years old.

But if one breaks, it has to be sent to Canada, and they'll do without it for about two or three months. So,

if they had to try and run the survey without a board, without any backups, they'd be in deep trouble. And that would take them more time and money than they have allocated. So those two items; adding stations to improve the data and the electronic measuring boards so they can actually collect the data are their highest priority. That's \$29,400.

The other items are things that would help them, but for 2001 they can do without. So, for the trawl survey those are the top two things. They have a \$53,000 wish list, but a \$29,000 critical list.

Bottom mapping has been extremely helpful for the essential fish habitat used by the councils as well as the states. They haven't collected any new data since 1995; it has been basically data presentation efforts on a very minor scale. There are three things under bottom mapping that would be extremely helpful and are really critical for the councils in terms of essential fish habitat. Within that, there are three proposals, but the main point is there are no mapping efforts that compile information for marine reserves or deep water species; the tilefish, snowy grouper, and just this year there are some rock shrimp trawlers that are actually coming up and impacting and having bycatch of tilefish and snowy grouper and things.

So, marine reserves are something that's coming up with the Council within the next two years. Right now they don't have the data to support actions and some new bottom mapping efforts would be good to do that.

Mr. Lee: Yes, I do have a question. I don't know that this is appropriate, but up in our area the Corps of Engineers has a research station up there and they do a lot of work on bottom mapping. Is that information shared with this group or would it be of any value at all?

Mr. White: I believe that Steve Ross and Fritz Rohde are the North Carolina members of the bottom mapping work group. I think a lot of the data from DUCK and other places has already been incorporated into the CD up through 1995.

The tradeoff in terms of bottom mapping efforts, there are three different things. One is converting some MARMAP data, which will cover many states. One is a North Carolina proposal, \$40,000, which would obtain a lot of the deep water data and give us a baseline for North Carolina and a few datasets that actually go South Carolina and maybe Florida.

The third is a proposal coming in from South Carolina, which has a \$32,000 match or possible match from MMS-INTERMAR, so those are matching funds that will likely only be possible in 2001. However, most of that data collection would occur more in nearshore areas, where we already have at least a baseline data.

So, that would be more of a data improvement activity, whereas with some deep water data, which is new, the North Carolina proposal is more deep water data overall. All three of those from the bottom mapping work group and the South Atlantic perspective are very high priority. Unfortunately, in 2001 we're not likely to have the funds to do all of that.

Ms. Shipman: Just a question, if I could interject. I'm aware that the National Marine Fisheries Service has a tremendous amount of money for EFH either out of the Washington office or wherever. I mean, I've seen some grants being issued to groups to the tune of \$400,000 on EFH. Has there been any attempt to go after some of the EFH monies by the work group?

Mr. White: Not by the work group. The work group has tried to function within the SEAMAP structure.

Ms. Shipman: Yes, well, insomuch as EFH is clearly a NMFS obligation, a National Marine Fisheries Service mandate, I'm just a little concerned that there's some money out there, other sources, and I sort of feel they have a responsibility, and I don't know why we've not gone after that money.

Mr. Pugliese: Yes, Susan, actually some of the money this year -- there was some money going to the regional office; that if they had end-of-year dollars were able to spend it on specific EFH-related projects. Some money was reallocated into the area to pick back up some of the Oculina Bank restoration research activity, so there is some money going into it. But specific to the bottom mapping effort, that money hasn't been perceived yet, but that was discussed.

At least I've been talking with Andy Major and other areas about kicking up the priorities to try to do this. The dollars out of Washington have been going in different directions. A lot of things are getting consumed by other regions that have higher priorities than us.

Ms. Shipman: Yes, but have we made a pitch for our priorities is my question? I mean, to me this is a NMFS mandate, and NMFS needs to be providing us the information for EFH. I mean, you're talking about year-end 2000 budget. I'm talking about 2001 budget.

Mr. Pugliese: And I talked to Andy about the 2001 dollars, and they have not actually gotten any indication of what they will have available from the regional level. He was going to try to find out where they stand, and we then can maybe leverage more opportunity to get some dollars through that.

Ms. Shipman: Louis, and then Dr. Powers may want to comment on money for EFH.

Dr. Daniel: Yes Susan, I agree with you, I mean, 100 percent. I mean, I've been involved with this SEAMAP project for a long time. The needs that we

have at the ASMFC level, with developing assessments and using these data as tuning indices for our stock assessments, and there's a real need here in terms of the biological information that's being gathered. If there's some way that we can tap into another source for the EFH requirements and fund these other necessary programs, but in my opinion not as high a priority as the biological information that we're using and that we're trying to improve upon.

But one question, Geoff. In terms of the proposals for the bottom mapping scenarios, at least in the North Carolina proposal, a lot of that's based on for deep water stuff, which I'm not sure I understand why we're - - it says, "We assume that the SEAMAP one-by-one minute grid will be extended into deep water covering the EEZ". Yet, we back off of deep water; is that just for the mapping the deep water?

Mr. White: Yes, that's mapping bottom habitat in deep water areas. The need for that, as I understand it, is for tilefish, grouper, some of the snappers.

Mr. Williams: Well, trying to cut to the chase here, following up what Louis was trying to do, why don't we just take scenario one, drop out the bottom mapping, that's going to leave you about \$62,000 to do the bottom trawling, and get these other things that you want here.

I mean, do the shallow water trawl, you get the shallow water trawl on these last three items here, and just drop the bottom mapping altogether unless you can find EFH money for it. But in terms of allocating the \$60,000, or whatever it is that we're going to end up with, it looks like the shallow water trawl is the right thing to fund and I'd just get on with it.

Ms. Shipman: And that's a question before the board. The only question I would have is Items 3 through 6 on Page 3 under the shallow water trawl scenario, they said they could do without that for 2001.

And my question is would we want to recommend that they pick up some of the biological information, piggy-back that onto the current trawl survey? You've got the sampling platform out there, and it sounded like you could do it for a very cost-effective way of getting some of the reproductive information, the age and growth, the things to augment the assessment.

Mr. White: It would be likely that they could collect some hard parts. That wouldn't be difficult. What we don't know is who would do the actual aging work, the processing back on land. I don't know if the states could pick up some of that or what species they would focus on.

Dr. Daniel: Yes, I mean, right now what's going on is that they're going out and taking -- additional folks from South Carolina are going out on these cruises or they're bringing back bags of fish frozen to process. If you've ever processed a bag of frozen fish, that's not

fun. The primary interest here is in the fact that we are only taking lengths and weights on these things.

And there's a tremendous amount of information there that we're losing because of the funding shortfalls in the trawl program. And one of the things that you'll notice, if you spend much time with the Stock Assessment Committee at least with the ASMFC, is that one of the things that tends to have the greatest impact and given the greatest weight in any assessment are these multi-aged indices.

Like the Delaware trawl survey for weakfish is given extraordinary weight; as is the NMFs inshore fall survey. And the problem that we have in SEAMAP is we don't have that age-structured information, and we need to be gathering that data, particularly for things like weakfish and Atlantic croaker. There may be some others, and I don't want to limit it to that, but those are certainly some that we need to be gathering that information on.

One of the things, from talking with the South Carolina folks and talking with the people that are aging these fish, and have been aging them for a long time now at their cost, is that they're getting to a point where they can't do it anymore.

So, I agree with Susan. I think we could fund their biological position that they've requested in this expanded funding program, which would give them that person that could go out and take the necessary structures, could at least examine the reproductive condition, if not take histological information from them, but be able to have that person that's dedicated to collecting that necessary biological information. There's no doubt in my mind that we would get the samples aged through a cooperative effort between South Carolina and North Carolina. We've been doing it for five years, we can continue to do it.

It's not that big a deal with the species that we're talking about, and it's not that time consuming. So, I would certainly like to see us try to fund that biological position and then put the rest of the money into the shallow water trawl survey. And if that means we can add the motion-compensating balances, because I know that is a need as well -- all six of those items under the shallow water trawl are needs. But as they said, they could live without the new trawls. But the motion-compensating balances and the other things, if we could somehow tweak it to where we could do those two things, I think we would get the biggest bang for our buck.

Dr. Powers: Yes, I wanted to back up and ask them some advice. Philosophically, what the SEAMAP Committee has done, whichever scenario you pick, it's basically kind of spread the risk and put some money in each one of the projects. I mean, what we're talking

about here is focusing in on maybe one or two projects. I just wanted to know what the committee's thoughts were when they did that? That's one thing.

And then secondly, I gathered from reading this, too, that these are actions to basically restore the program to full utilization. Although, as I look at this, it's really not restoring it, it's moving toward restoration.

Mr. White: Exactly.

Dr. Powers: In particular, things like data management, although it's listed as a need for restoration, it isn't being addressed in this set of money. I just want to know some of the rationale behind that.

Mr. White: The 2001 data management tasks are going to occur. Basically there's no funding necessary for that. The work group is moving on things and NMFS is supporting the data management with some of their dollars. So, from a South Atlantic perspective, we don't need to consider that for 2001 funding, even though activities are occurring on that front. In terms of the committee's perspective, they were trying to balance the needs of work groups.

In 1998 and 2000 the bottom mapping work group was zeroed out in terms of funding in the South Atlantic because of needs for the trawl survey. They all recognize the utility of the bottom mapping data and wanted to bring some resources back to that. That's why all three scenarios are kind of a balance.

Ms. Shipman: And if I could just add it back to you, though, Louis, in looking at what we reviewed in June, the restoration, if we want to do restoration shallow water survey, it did not include collecting age, growth and reproductive.

That was an expansion. The expansion cost for age and growth sampling, reproduction gonad sampling, and an additional biologist, that adds up to \$54,100. If you add the \$29,400 to that, that's \$83,500. I'm not sure it's likely we're going to get that much. We can certainly go after that much.

Dr. Daniel: But my comment was if we go in with the shallow water trawl, scenario one -- I mean, scenario two and three, which is basically the 30K.

Ms. Shipman: Right.

Dr. Daniel: Then you've got the additional biologist at 30K. That's 60K, period. And that's it, is what I'm saying, because there are costs in here, we don't -- the gonad sampling, that's primarily -- that money is histology, which you don't absolutely have to have.

You can get on board, you can cut the fish, you can at least get some baseline gross macroscopic analysis there, which is fine for right now. The aging stuff, if the biologist is dedicated to going out on the cruises and collecting the information, he can certainly collect the data.

The only cost is going to be envelopes to put the otoliths in. So, what I'm saying is, is that between the cooperative effort that we've had ongoing now for the last five years with South Carolina, the information collected from that could be processed with monies outside of this.

Ms. Shipman: Okay.

Dr. Daniel: We could handle that, and there's no doubt in my mind. I can call Charlie and talk to him about it to confirm that. But he's been doing it for five years, and we've been helping him with our age and growth lab. And the species that we're talking about here are extraordinarily easy to excise the otoliths, and they're extraordinarily easy to process and read. So it's not a tremendous effort.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to point out that if you go with what we reviewed, it actually exceeds the 60,000, but your scenario would not? Okay.

So, in essence, what we need to do is just decide whether or not we need a motion to go one direction or another; either accept one of these scenarios, hybrid or modification, which is what Roy and Louis has suggested. So, we would entertain a motion.

Dr. Daniel: I just have one more question. Under the bottom mapping scenarios -- I'm trying to zero out this 65,000 is what I'm trying to do. The 5,000 --

Mr. White: We may be able to leverage -- I'm sorry for hopping in. One of the things with bottom mapping was if they need to work on some protocols of translating older datasets into the new GIS format, we may be able to leverage a little bit with the Caribbean because they have a bottom mapping project as well.

Dr. Daniel: But the data conversion in which they cite Roger in terms of being supportive of a data capture -- it's on the bottom of Page 3 -- it looks like that's just five grand. Is that correct?

Mr. White: It is and I'm sorry for not explaining that. It was kind of a 5K add-on to be done in conjunction with other efforts. That's not really a stand-alone.

Dr. Daniel: So we can't get that for 5K?

Mr. White: Probably not. That's a 5K add-on that could go with either the North Carolina proposal or the South Carolina proposal.

Dr. Daniel: Got you.

Mr. White: It's listed separately, but it would need to go with one of them, but it doesn't matter which one.

Dr. Daniel: All right, then I would make a motion that we recommend or accept scenarios two and three under the shallow water trawl scenario and the additional biologist --

Mr. Williams: Where are you reading from? Are you talking about on this one right here?

Ms. Shipman: Page 2.

Dr. Daniel: Yes. Well, I think; I'm not sure what - Page 3, the shallow water trawl scenario. I'll make the motion and then I'll explain where I'm going. **Move to accept scenarios two and three under the shallow water trawl survey and fund the additional biologist for collection of age and growth and reproductive data for high priority fishes.**

Mr. Williams: **I'm going to second it** so we can discuss it, but I'd like to talk then.

Ms. Shipman: Okay. We have a motion by Louis Daniel, second by Roy Williams to approve scenarios two and three under the shallow water trawl survey, which is \$29,400, and fund the additional biologist to collect additional age, growth, and reproductive data for \$30,400.

Mr. Williams: Maybe I do understand it, then. What you're referring to as the scenarios doesn't relate to these scenarios on the first page of this document?

Dr. Daniel: No, sir.

Mr. Williams: It relates to addition of inner stations at \$20,000 and the electronic measuring boards at \$9,400?

Ms. Shipman: Yes, correct.

Mr. Williams: That comes to a total of \$29,400, and then you were talking about you're going to the other document.

Dr. Daniel: On Page 4.

Mr. Williams: Going to page 4 of the second document under expand current projects to collect additional data on existing platforms. The South Atlantic is the very last thing there; additional biologist \$30,400, and that's going to pay salary.

Ms. Shipman: Yes.

Mr. Williams: How does that differ from age-and-growth sampling above there for \$11,600 annually? I mean there's --

Dr. Daniel: That's what I was discussing. That cost is probably to buy -- and I'm not positive about this, but it's probably to buy saws. Be Because of the species that we're dealing with here, it may be to buy one of the Hillquist high-speed saws, which are very expensive, probably 8, 9 grand. It's the equipment to do the aging. But as I indicated, those programs are already set up in both South Carolina North Carolina. We have that equipment. I know, from talking to the folks on the cruises, that that necessary additional biologist will allow them to collect much of that needed information.

It will require our cooperative efforts to get the actual aging down through our existing programs, but that would fit in very nicely with our Wallop/Breaux proposals. Where we are already aging these species, we would have an opportunity to augment our

sampling, and it would allow us to simply tie that in to existing funding from other federal programs.

Mr. Williams: This age-and-growth work is being done on what species? What you're catching in these trawl samples are what, weakfish?

Dr. Daniel: The two primary ones that are in my mind that are currently being aged on a continuing basis are weakfish and Atlantic croaker. Now, there may be other species that we want to add into that.

For the necessary data collection, you can always archive some of that information for other important species if you're not able to age them right away. I would want to know if there are any species that are extraordinarily difficult to process or age because that would be a constraint. But I know, if this biologist position were funded now, we would be able to develop those high-priority species, collect all the necessary age and reproductive information on them. We may have to archive some of it.

But certainly, the weakfish and the croaker information, which is probably the most important -- and these guys will jump in if I'm wrong -- are probably the two dominant and most important species for which we're trying to collect age-specific indices of abundance through this trawl survey, would be able to be accomplished with this position.

Mr. Williams: And one follow-up; these trawls are effective at collecting weakfish and croaker beyond age zero, say?

Ms. Shipman: Yes.

Dr. Daniel: Yes, they are. In fact, I'm not sure how the gear compares to the NMFS inshore fall survey. Do you know, Geoff?

Mr. White: It's a much different gear. But in terms of how the indices compare, I'm not sure.

Dr. Daniel: We're seeing fish three, I think we're even getting some fours now in with weakfish. And I'm not sure, I don't think we've done any aging or very little aging of the croaker just because we haven't had the opportunity to collect that information like we'd like to.

Ms. Shipman: We're lagging behind and we really need to move on. Other discussion on the motion? Okay, I'll call the vote. All those in favor of the motion? Again, the state delegation's vote have one vote, so Louis and Wayne may need to caucus. But, anyway, all those in favor signify by saying aye. All those opposed? Okay, **the motion carries**. Okay, thank you very much.

The other thing we might want to do is -- I think we all recognize the importance of the bottom mapping, as Roy pointed out. It's not that we don't think that that is important, we certainly do, and maybe we want to emphasize the need to pursue funding through possibly

EFH funding for that work.

And if for some reason the Caribbean cannot do their work with whatever portion they're going to end up with after the conference calls, that perhaps we make an offer to spend their money for them doing some bottom mapping.

Would that be agreeable to the group? Okay, I'm seeing nods in the affirmative. Okay Geoff, let's wrap up.

Mr. White: Thank you. I think that takes care of that item. Our third item is the data management web page and data access items. In the same packet that we were just working out of in terms of the funding scenarios, Page 5, most of these items are informational and you can read them.

The one that we do need to get a little direction on is on Page 6. Basically, from a technical standpoint, the web page, the seamap.org central webpage can be located either at the Atlantic states or the Gulf States Commission.

Technically, resource-wise and capability-wise, and who would update it, it doesn't make a difference where it's physically located. The option in the middle of the page is either to; one, have a site where all the information is located on that specific sight housed in one machine, has the same formats and layouts and looks the same; or, whether or not there's direction on whether the central site basically provides a pointer to the Gulf, South Atlantic and Caribbean Commissions where they would describe their specific projects.

The work group has said that as long as it looks and feels the same, like you're in one cohesive unit, that physically it does not matter where the computer is located. And the only direction they need from this group is basically to support that -- if each component is supporting their own computer for this, that the format and design of the page looks consistent.

That's basically what the work group wanted it to be, and did not want to argue where everything should be housed, because that was more of an ownership question that wasn't for them to face.

Ms. Shipman: So, what do they want from us, and is this a decision we have to make today?

Mr. White: I don't think so. I think I can clarify this for you and we can talk about it via e-mail.

Mr. Shipman: Okay, if that would suit everybody, let's just handle this one by e-mail.

Mr. Cole: You know, these sort of things require IT support, and I think both programs are going to have that sort of IT support. But at the moment, you know, the Gulf is a little bit ahead with the business object's application.

And given that they've already got a leg up on it, if we can have one IT support group or something that

supports the whole system and be done with it, it would certainly seem a whole lot simpler than having the other two components of the program having to have their IT people break off and support individual regional web pages. I mean, it would just certainly seem simpler.

Ms. Shipman: So are you suggesting, what, number one?

Mr. Cole: I think I am. I think that's what I'm doing, because they've already got a leg up on it.

Ms. Shipman: Yes.

Mr. Cole: I mean, yes, ACCSP could support this same sort of thing but our programs are somewhat different on either side of that dividing line for statistical programs, but I'm not so sure that they are for the SEAMAP program, is it?

Mr. White: They are pretty similar. The suggestion was really -- the Gulf is ahead on the business objects linked to SEAMAP data, and the work group would want to maintain the data access through the Gulf.

It was just whether or not, as a coordination and cooperative option, that the informational end of the website, the static text and links to the committee membership and documents and things, the South Atlantic has offered to house that and then link to the Gulf with the data access just so kind of everyone is involved.

Mr. Cole: Madam Chairman, the simpler we can keep this, the easier it's going to be to maintain it and support it in the long run.

Mr. Lee: I was just going to say, I'd support what Bill is saying. From a user standpoint, I think we'd be more consistent if you have whoever is doing the work for all the information is putting it together at one, so the formats are the same so when you tap into it, everything is the same.

And I think for consistency, if you have two different sites and two inputs, you're going to get problems in downloading it, using the data, different systems and that kind of thing. So, I think from a consistency standpoint, we ought to have a central location.

Ms. Shipman: I'm seeing nods around the table. Everybody agrees with that so let's go with the central site, and we can just do a link from the ASMFC website straight into theirs. Okay?

Mr. White: All right, that takes care of that. And on the 2001-2005 management plan, that is not ready for final approval at this point. I have not been able to complete that with both components. But there is a quick item that I wanted to get approval of from the Board, and that is on Page 5 of the expanding SEAMAP activities document. Within the

South Atlantic, we have two bullets for bottom mapping.

One is expand bottom mapping to capture data sources in deep water, and the other is for the nearshore environment. The work group and committee has discussed moving those up to the restoration activities because those fall within the charge and direction of the work group and what they should be doing. They were originally put in expansion because they hadn't done that activity since '95. But they do fit within their charge and recommended moving those up to Section 1, which is restoration projects. This is for the five year priorities. It is not for funding right now.

Ms. Shipman: One of the merits I see in doing that is it might help us as we endorse any kind of effort to go seek outside funding from the EFH if we have it as a priority for restoration under SEAMAP. I think we need to change the wording where it says expand the survey, because that denotes an expansion.

Mr. White: Of course.

Ms. Shipman: We need to somehow reword that.

Mr. White: Reinstate?

Ms. Shipman: Reinstate, yes, restore the survey to capture, so on and so forth. Is there any objection to doing that? Does everybody think that's a good idea? I see nods in the affirmative and no objections, so we will move that up into the restoration component of the five-year plan, which will come to us later for approval.

Mr. White: Yes, thank you. That finishes my items for the SEAMAP update.

Mr. Brown: We have two things. On Page 6, South Atlantic component, I just wanted to know if the part where you want to develop an estuarine and nearshore ocean subadult/adult finfish survey, Canaveral to Hatteras, does that include the Banana River Complex?

Ms. Shipman: I'm having a hard time hearing you.

Mr. Brown: I was wondering if the subadult/adult finfish survey from Canaveral to Hatteras, if it includes the Banana River Complex, and maybe that should go all the way to Sebastian Inlet?

Mr. White: That hasn't been specified at this point. We can certainly add that in to change it to move further south, and I'm sorry I didn't include that.

Mr. Brown: My concern is the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge harbors a large population of lunker redfish, and there are a number of other finfish and shellfish that are in that area that escape also through the Sebastian Inlet.

Mr. White: It would be very easy to make that change in this section.

Mr. Cole: Geoff, what Columbus is pointing out, remember NASA has an honest closed area in there. I mean, it wasn't --

Ms. Shipman: It's a definitive reserve.

Mr. Cole: It's a true preserve, reserve, whatever you want to call it, and we don't have to enforce it. NASA can do that one very easily. But it does export -- and I think what Columbus is saying is our my experience has been if you don't go down at least to Sebastian Inlet, you may not pick up the export from that system.

Ms. Shipman: It sounds like everybody is amenable to adding that in, so we'd ask that you do that. Okay, the second item, Bill.

Mr. White: I can do that.

Mr. Cole: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'm going to report to you on another SEAMAP item that I said I wasn't going to do again last year, but somehow I've been forced to do, and that is the offshore winter tagging cruise. We will be, hopefully, departing on the second leg of this year's Beaufort ship allocation on approximately the 14th of January. We have a seven-day leg to do the offshore winter tagging.

In the past years, this has been primarily a compliance item for Amendment 5 of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act imposed on the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service to undertake this cruise to do an offshore tagging program on the offshore mixed stocks.

As it turns out, this is the only program that does work on the mixed stocks and has proven to be the underpinning, if you will, of all the population dynamic models that are used for trend analysis and regulatory prediction.

I think more important to this Board today is for you to be aware, particularly for some of the NMFS people who haven't been involved in it, this is a SEAMAP activity. The SEAMAP picks up a large portion of the ship's cost for this every year and the expenses of people on board. The Service picks up a lot of the other expenses, et cetera. It's sort of a shared thing.

We do report annually, and you will find our report in the annual SEAMAP narratives. But important to the states that are here today, last year we did quite a bit of sample work. We brought back a whole lot of stuff frozen, and it was shipped immediately to South Carolina as part of what Louis was talking about.

If there are any other samples or collections that any of the agencies need while we're offshore, we will do everything we can to accommodate you. We tag not only striped bass, but we've done flounder.

We've probably done more dogfish than anyone else over the years. We've certainly done our fair share of trout, our fair share of a lot of others, red drum, for instance. But if anyone knows of any researcher who does need samples brought back, at least from the area

from Cape Lookout to roughly the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, please let me know. We'll do everything we can to accommodate them this year. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, any other questions on SEAMAP?

Mr. White: I just wanted to thank everyone for putting up with the confusion and giving us some more direction to the future.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, thank you, Geoff. You and the work groups have done yeoman's service, particularly over the last month. You all have really been scrambling, and we appreciate that and look forward to the management plans. The next time we meet we'll be presumably approving that.

Mr. White: We hope so.

Ms. Shipman: Okay. All right, we're going to move on to Item 6, if nobody has anything else on SEAMAP, and those are the species updates. I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Desfosse.

SPECIES UPDATES

Dr. Desfosse: Thank you, Susan. In lieu of FMP reviews, just for this meeting I'm going to introduce the South Atlantic Board to a planning document that we use internally to sort of plan our activities for the upcoming year. And so the document we handed out yesterday afternoon, ISMFP planning for 2001, there are extra copies in the back of the room, if you don't have those copies.

Just a note on the FMP reviews, the 2000 FMP reviews are not complete. That's why I don't have them to approve at this meeting. I was having trouble accessing commercial data from the NMFS Website for 1999. It's still not available. And with other activities that I had going, I failed to get the documents out to the Plan Review Teams in a timely enough fashion. So, hopefully, by the end of January, if the South Atlantic Board meets again during the Commission's meeting week, you'll have those documents to look at.

Ms. Shipman: And this is another thing, I think if we need to, we can do by conference call. I mean, we could distribute them and then just have a brief conference call if we need to approve them. One of the components of the Atlantic Coastal Act is we do have to do an annual affirmation of the Fishery Management Plan. So, it's something that we have an obligation to do.

Dr. Desfosse: Okay, moving on to this document here; briefly, it's a shorthand document. It identifies the management issues for each of the species -- this is the South Atlantic species -- and the meetings requested for the upcoming year.

You'll notice that the South Atlantic Board, if you add all the meetings up it probably comes up to something like six or seven. It's actually not that many South Atlantic Board meetings. We probably only have three meetings during the course of the year. It's just the number of Board meetings that would be needed to handle the different species. You will note that red drum and Atlantic croaker are probably the only two species where there's any real activity for the upcoming year. Spanish mackerel, spot and spotted sea trout are in more of a monitoring phase. There are no activities planned for those species other than there's an annual -- I believe it's an annual stock assessment for Spanish mackerel. And then you also have the FMP reviews for each of those species.

The tables that follow the first page basically lay out the activities for each of those species on a quarterly basis for the next three years. I've listed the activities that occurred during this past year, 2000, just so that you could see what had occurred or was supposed to occur during this year. And then you can see how we planned the approach for the management of the different species over the next three years. The presentation yesterday, given a brief presentation on red drum, you'll see that starting in the winter of 2001 would begin the amendment process for Amendment 2 to the Red Drum FMP. The schedule that's laid out here would have the new amendment approved and adopted sometime in mid 2002. So, a year and a half is about the average timeframe for a new amendment.

What I'd like to South Atlantic Board to do is to give a little time to the management issues that are identified for red drum and Atlantic croaker and give any input or advice to the staff in terms of any other additional needs for those species; and then just to briefly review the time line for those for the next couple of years.

Red Drum

Ms. Shipman: Okay, under the management issues, Dr. Vaughan, yesterday, updated us on where he is with regard to the rebuilding targets. I think he and Dr. Carmichael have been working on that. My understanding is they are going to finish that and have a report ready in late winter/early spring and bring that to the Technical Committee, I believe.

So, any questions about that from the Board? Okay, then the technical analysis of the management options, is that not part and parcel of what John and Doug are working on ?

Dr. Desfosse: Yes, I think the Technical Committee would convene -- I think we talked about sometime in late February, early March, and they would

provide their review and then an update to the Management Board possibly in April.

Dr. Daniel: And in that circumstance, Joe, they will come up with the management options themselves; I mean, the types of actions that we're looking at analyzing for the document? I mean if we're going to get a rebuilding schedule, that's one thing.

And then the management actions that need to be taken to meet those, that will be in the PID, I would think; right?

Dr. Desfosse: Typically, you don't have management options, per se, in the public information document. You usually put that in the draft FMP or draft amendment. In the PID you could probably put or outline the types of approaches that you may be considering for the amendment.

The Technical Committee, if you are charging them with coming up with the different options, then that's what they will do. I believe right now they're only looking at evaluating bag limits and size limits.

Dr. Daniel: There has been a lot of discussion, especially at our last meeting, about the adequacy of the commercial quota. I know there's been a lot of discussion about that in terms of whether or not that's appropriate; what we have is appropriate; whether it's too high, too low, whatever the case may be.

There has also been a lot of discussion about the variability amongst the states in terms of the allowable harvest of the adult fish. That has been another thing that doesn't really fit into the theoretical bag and size limit analysis in a sense.

So, I think we do need to have the Technical Committee at least consider what type of management options they feel are appropriate to get this fishery back on that jump start that we're looking for through Amendment 2. We also probably need to add in there, as well under the management options, what we discussed yesterday afternoon in terms of the request to the Secretary and go ahead and have that in there as well.

Ms. Shipman: I didn't hear the last part of that.

Dr. Daniel: The request to the Secretary?

Ms. Shipman: Oh, yes, I think that clearly needs to be identified in the public information document. I mean, we need to go forward to the public early on with that, I believe, about the shift in management.

Mr. Williams: Yes, I've got a slightly different take on this than Louis does, I think. Yesterday, Louis, you mentioned that probably the appropriate way to manage this fishery is with escapement goals. And it would seem to me that -- I guess we could ask each of the states to analyze what they think they're achieving in escapement now, but you can't hardly do that until you have a plan in place. I mean, in terms of trying to

do this technical analysis of management options, each state, I believe, is taking a slightly different route in managing or achieving the escapement goals.

It seems like I would ask them to submit an analysis of what they think they are achieving and then have a Technical Committee look at that. But that almost seems like that would be in the second year of the plan rather than in the first year of the plan.

Ms. Shipman: Roy, I think that's in the assessment. I mean I think it identifies what --

Mr. Williams: Doug has already done that?

Ms. Shipman: Yes, that's part of the assessment that has already been done.

Mr. Williams: So, Doug has done the analysis on a state-by-state basis of what the escapements are?

Ms. Shipman: I think it's the two components.

Dr. Daniel: Well, it has been done regionally because we have a northern and a southern component to the stock. Essentially from North Carolina north is the northern region; South Carolina south is the southern region.

But we do have some independent analysis from Florida that suggests that the actions that have been taken there over the last 6, 7, 8 years, however long it's been, has resulted in extraordinary escapement rates. I believe I'm speaking correctly in saying that you're well above the 40 percent goal; whereas, North Carolina and the northern component is still hovering around 17 to 18 percent. The South Carolina/Georgia component of the southern region is hovering around 17 to 18 percent.

Mr. Williams: So, maybe the technical analysis is already there, then?

Ms. Shipman: My understanding is the technical analysis was going to be the rebuilding targets that John and Doug were coming up with, and of the management options. What are the scenarios that would get us to those escapement targets?

Right now we have the escapement target of the 30 percent SPR. It's in the plan. I guess the question in the PID is do we revise that; you know, to what degree move it, bump it up to 40 percent? What do we do?

So, I think those are some of the issues that have to be considered in the PID; the biological reference points target, so on and so forth.

Mr. Lee: I'm going to go back to what Louis said again. Based on our meeting yesterday on this emergency rule, I think that emergency rule, as well as the withdrawal action, providing the Council ends up approving the action we took yesterday, needs to be identified in this schedule of activities.

I'm not sure where we take off with going forward from ASMFC to NMFS to ask for that emergency rule action and when that should take place and how long it takes. I would think that we need to track that in our

management plan here.

Ms. Shipman: Yes, on red drum I don't think there's any issue with an emergency rule. On red drum we weren't talking an emergency rule. On red drum we were merely talking about going forward to the Secretary and requesting that the process be initiated to shift management of red drum in the EEZ from management under the Magnuson Act to management under the Atlantic Coastal Act.

Mr. Lee: You're talking about in terms of going forward, but I just think that should be identified as a specific action item in our plan.

Ms. Shipman: Yes, that would be on the Council's side. Now we could certainly fold that into the public information document to let the public know that that is a management option we collectively are considering? Does that sound okay to you? That would be part of the PID, which is the public information document. Anything else on this? On the management issues, is everything pretty much identified here for 2001?

And the reason we're doing this, the Commission has 22 fishery management plans. We have limited resources, and what the Policy Board of the Commission has spent quite a bit of time, from June through this last meeting in October, is allocating out these resources.

In essence, what you see here is what the Commission has said we've got the money to do. And so, in essence, this is the menu. We don't have any resources to add anything onto this menu. If this Board wants to do that, we've got to identify external resources to do it.

Mr. Mahood: You mean we don't have some money in place now to get these resources shifted if we need to move our priorities up a little bit?

Ms. Shipman: Oh, you have the person in place and she has said she has learned to just say no. No, really, we just have the limited resources. And even with the augmentation of Atlantic Coastal Act monies, those monies are fairly limited of what the additional money was.

We're working on some priorities for the for the Policy Board to decide where to spend those monies, but it's only about \$250,000. So, does anybody have anything else they want to add and resources identified to add to it?

That's our plan, if you will, for red drum for at least the next year and a half. Okay, Joe, move on to croaker, I guess.

Dr. Desfosse: Actually, just one other item under red drum. Sometime last year Roger was requesting state input on the source document for red drum, and we spoke earlier this week and that document and that effort will provide the basis for the amendment and

provide all the background material. So, it should not be a lengthy writing process in terms of developing the amendment.

Ms. Shipman: Is that the SAFE report, Bob? I'm not real sure what you all are talking about.

Mr. Pugliese: Yes, Joe is referring to when we initially discussed in the beginning doing red drum. We initiated a request to update the source document which was used for the original Council plan, and that was set in motion.

There was activity through the Plan Development Team or the existing, whatever we were originally called, to begin to compile that information. There's an individual in the state of South Carolina that was actually working on bringing that material together.

We've been kind of in limbo in terms of figuring out exactly where the Council ultimately would go in terms of transfer of that, and how we were going to deal with doing it, basically all at the Council level or having to transfer it and actually whatever source document or whatever material be compiled for the ASMFC plan. And that's where we are now with that. In terms of actually how much more has actually been written or put together, I'll have to get Charlie Wenner and some of the other members to find out exactly where we are with that.

But that request went out a long time -- the first time we sat down to discuss it, like a year and a half, two years ago, so it has just been kind of building up. Some information has been building and some background is there.

And some writing I think has already been done. And I know the compilation is available; research information and everything has been done, so there's actually a lot that has been done to be able to create that. ASMFC has the original entire South Atlantic Council source document. So, that's what he's referring to.

Ms. Shipman: So, in essence, we're picking it up as a cooperative effort between the Council, South Carolina, the states and ASMFC?

Mr. Pugliese: Yes. Originally we were kind of taking it as a lead as being a Council source document. Now it's really going to be a source document for ASMFC with the lead coming through there.

Ms. Shipman: It's inherent in the schedule, I am told. Okay, we are really running tight on time so we've got to move on.

Atlantic Croaker

Dr. Desfosse: I won't take too much longer. Atlantic croaker, you want to begin an amendment sometime in the near future. We're waiting on the stock

assessment to be completed, and I believe that was being conducted through North Carolina State University. The draft assessment has been distributed. We're waiting for comments from the Technical Committee members. The plan right now is to have some of those Technical Committee members sit down during the red drum meeting, or at the end of the red drum, and discuss the assessment again and provide a report to the Management Board, hopefully, in April.

With red drum starting the amendment process, I'm not sure that we'd have the staff resources to do Atlantic croaker at the same time. So, what I've outlined in the time table is picking up the amendment to the croaker plan at a later date.

Ms. Shipman: And I think that's what we discussed in June. I mean, we simply don't have the resources within the Commission, within the Interstate Fishery Management Program to do these simultaneously.

Red drum is the higher priority and so our decision had been to do red drum; and then probably, once we finish red drum in mid-2002, then turn to croaker.

Dr. Daniel: Yes, and I would just urge every one that has staff that deals with croaker, to urge them to do a thorough review of this assessment and get that information to either John Carmicheal or Joe Hightower. There has been a lot of discussion about this assessment. There are a lot of concerns about this assessment in terms of the aging methodology that's being used and the input parameters that are being used, and a lack thereof.

And everybody is talking about it over the phone but nobody is providing any hard comments, and that's the problem that we're having with croaker right now. So we need to get those folks from the National Marine Fisheries Service that are on the Committee and from the different states that are on the Committee to provide a formal review so that Joe can start making the revisions and start putting together and start addressing some of these concerns that we have.

Otherwise, we're going to be backlogged at the first Technical Committee meeting. We're not going to have anything to review other than what we've already criticized.

Ms. Shipman: Critiqued might be a better word; evaluated, critiqued. Okay, any comments on croaker?

Mr. Williams: Not a comment but a question for Louis. Who has done the assessment, your people?

Dr. Daniel: The assessment was -- well no, we set up an assessment group. We were going to conduct an assessment, but then we were able to get Joe Hightower from North Carolina State University.

He and a student, I believe it's a student, compiled all the information that they could gather and conducted an assessment. And the Board had agreed for that to

occur and then have the Technical Committee review it. John Carmicheal is the Chairman of the Stock Assessment Group and he has been involved with Joe. It's on a website. It's well distributed, and it has gone out to all the reviewers and we've sent several e-mails out to them asking for comments and still have yet to receive any. So, that's kind of where we are with the assessment.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, any other discussion on croaker? All right, seeing none, we're going to move on to the next three, if Joe has any comments on those.

Spot, Spotted Seatrout and Spanish Mackerel

Dr. Desfosse: Just briefly. I mentioned earlier that these three species are more in a monitoring phase. There's no real active management going on; no activities in the ISFMP. Something that may come up in the near future, the Commission has a stock assessment peer review prioritization process.

Basically, the Management and Science Committee of the Commission oversees the status of the assessments for different species. Some species fall through the cracks, and there isn't any work that's being done on those species. So the process that the MSC follows is that there's a five-year time limit. If an assessment has not been conducted within five years on a certain species, all of a sudden the trigger goes off and that species is identified for peer review prioritization.

Spot and spotted seatrout; there are no active stock assessments being conducted. There doesn't seem to be any being conducted in the near future. Both of those species may be triggered under this five-year process.

So, I just wanted to bring that up to the South Atlantic Board and ask is this a big priority issue and should a message be sent to MSC on these species?

Mr. Williams: Yes, I would guess the states are doing the seatrout, at least, themselves. I know Florida has done assessments on seatrout, and we've got it by regions within the state. And I don't know that there -- I don't think there's a need for ASMFC to do one regionally. I don't know what sense it would make regionally, because they're localized populations.

Chairman Shipman: I agree with you, Roy. And I know South Carolina has done one. They did one for us using our data a couple years ago. We talked about doing another one next year. Georgia would do our own. I don't know the status in North Carolina. But I agree with you, I think spotted seatrout is somewhat unique in that they are recognized as local populations and were probably best left to the states to do our own assessments of that.

Spot, do you have any preference or suggestions or guidance on what we might take back to the Policy

Board with regard to spot? Given our limited resources, I don't know how high a priority that is.

Dr. Daniel: Yes, first I would agree with the speckled trout issue. North Carolina received an assessment similar to the one that Georgia received from South Carolina. We have been working with them on spotted seatrout. And that is certainly a state issue, in my mind, a state assessment issue.

In terms of spot, I don't think I could assign it any lower priority; primarily because of their longevity, number one. They don't live -- it's very rare to find one over three years old.

But probably most importantly to the ASMFC with the actions that we've taken with the bycatch reduction devices in the South Atlantic shrimp trawl fishery, and the mesh restrictions that we've put into affect in the weakfish fishery certainly, probably, would suffice for any management actions that ever may need to be taken on spot. So my recommendation back to the Management and Science Committee would be that there is no need to do an assessment on spot.

Mr. Williams: Does Joe need a motion on this or is what he's got enough?

Ms. Shipman: I see general consensus around the table. Everybody agrees that spot is a low priority to dedicate resources to as far as an assessment. And we would recommend that it be skipped at that fifth year when that trigger goes off. Seeing no objection to that, that's what we'll recommend.

Dr. Desfosse: That's all I had on the species updates for right now.

Ms. Shipman: Okay, thank you. The only other item I had -- and it's going to be real quick, and I'm just going to pass these around and ask you to take one. This is an item we deferred in June and it has to do with fish tissue sampling for contaminate analyses. Back last year you will remember the joint fish consumption advisory that all four states issued on king mackerel.

The North Carolina Public Health Officials had suggested to our agencies' environmental toxicologists that the states might want to collect more detailed information on mercury in the fishery resources of the South Atlantic. This is an issue that Council discussed in June, and I think the position where the Council left off is that we would provide information and advice to those toxicologists. The issues associated with the fish consumption advisories are far reaching.

They, obviously, have potential impacts on recreational and commercial fishing-related economies on markets. And they also have TMDL implication, and TMDLs are total maximum daily loads. Those are the EPA guidelines. And EPA is under court order in the southeast and many states to implement TMDLs

where the water, or where the water quality classifications do not meet the prescribed uses under state regulations and so on and so forth.

So there are some implications there. And the question that's been posed by some of the environmental toxicologists is are there important species that are regularly harvested in the state waters that need to be studied for mercury or other heavy metals? And if there are, there's then the strong suggestion from the toxicologists, and I think the Council agrees, and we just need to see what the sentiment of this body is, that future tissue monitoring should be probably coordinated on a region-wide basis for a defined subset of species, or something to that.

Roy probably has more experience with this than anybody, or the state of Florida, I should say, the state of Florida does. And I just wanted to pass this all to you. I'm sorry South Carolina isn't with us here today. Unfortunately, they had a conflict and couldn't be.

But my understanding is they plan a workshop or symposium sometime, I believe, in the spring that Charlie Moore is coordinating, and I'm not real sure of the target audience. I do know they plan to involve the environmental toxicologist. I think they want to get the fishing public involved. It would seem to me they need to get the fishery managers involved in that workshop to I think just discuss in detail this issue of fish consumption advisories and mercury. That particular one is mercury-related.

I just want to bring it to the attention to this group to see if you have any particular sentiment or guidance or policy that we would like to communicate back to, I suppose the environmental toxicologists in our respective states, about whether we would like to be involved in setting up any future sampling schemes or identifying priority species and so on and so forth.

Dr. Daniel: I do have one comment, and this is from our experience from king mackerel in North Carolina. And that is any of these groups that deal with this issue absolutely have to bring the Fishery Management Agencies into the loop. We have got to come up with some kind of a protocol to describe the fishery to these folks so that when they do their risk analysis, they can do it and do it appropriately.

What we found in North Carolina with king mackerel, for example, was that a very, very, very small percentage of the king mackerel harvested in the commercial fishery exceeded this contaminant level. And once they found that out, then they understood that the risk and the chances of this causing any serious harm to the public was greatly diminished, and that was based on conference calls with the EPA that day and several other things.

So they need to be presented with the factual

information on the length-frequency distributions from the catches so they can get some kind of a handle on whether or not this poses a real health risk. And without us being involved in it, they don't get that information and they go off half-cocked saying, you know, don't eat any king mackerel when really the chances of encountering significant quantities of contaminated king mackerel are really quite rare.

Mr. Lee: Susan, could I just add to what Louis said from a standpoint, too, that one of the problems in North Carolina was the early identification and notification of the problem and issue. It kind of came upon us very rapidly and that caused problems.

So any time there's an issue that's beginning to surface, that word needs to go out to all the state activities so that they can start looking at it and addressing it.

Ms. Shipman: And I think in that regard, if they involve the Fishery Management Agencies early on, along with the Public Health Agencies, we will be plugged in early on and can give them guidance as to the release of that information, coordinated news releases; putting it into perspective, as Louis said, of what truly is the public risk.

Would you want us to just communicate, on behalf of the South Atlantic Board, to the South Carolina symposium organizers that we would like for them to incorporate and include fishery managers in that upcoming symposium? Okay.

And then perhaps at our next Board meeting, South Carolina may have more to say on this issue. But it's something I wanted to bring to our attention because I think we need to stay tuned into it, because the Public Health Officials certainly are tuned in to it. I don't think we want to be blind-sided. Anything else on that topic?

Okay, other business; does anybody have any other business?

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Lee: Susan, I thought you were going to address that advisory issue. Are you going to address that or not?

Ms. Shipman: Oh, the Advisory Panel issue on red drum? We sort of discussed it yesterday. And where I think we left off -- and we can discuss it some more -- we were going to get the South Atlantic Council's Advisory Panel list.

I believe, get that to this body, and we may need to look over that at the next Board meeting. We need to have everybody look at that; see if that is broadly enough representative of the fishery, of the fishery interest in our respective states; see how that needs to

be expanded to incorporate additional interests that are not adequately represented, geographical interests that are not adequately represented.

And I think we're going to have to bring in some Mid-Atlantic folks to that. I would certainly encourage us to do that. So I think that's kind of where we left off, but, Wayne, we can work further on that in the brief time we've got left, if you want to.

Mr. Lee: No, I just primarily wanted that mentioned for the record since yesterday you said that would be a topic, you know, for this particular group, because I think it does need to be looked at so we get the right people.

Chairman Shipman: And we do, by the way, have the booklet. Yes, we have those booklets that does have our Red Drum AP in it, and everybody might want to take a look at that while we're here; give Joe some guidance and then we can work with Tina Berger, who coordinates the Advisory Panel process for the Commission.

We all need to look at that and be ready at the next meeting to say how that needs to be modified and expanded, so that would be the homework I'd leave everybody for the next meeting. Okay, any other business? Thank you Wayne for bringing that up. Other business to come before the South Atlantic Board?

And I was remiss in not recognizing Homer Bryson who was with us a little bit earlier. Homer is the law enforcement liaison for the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee to our Board and he's been with us the last couple of days. We appreciate him driving all the way up from Georgia to be with us.

And everybody else that sat in, thank you all too. And I want to thank Joe and Geoff for their hard work and all the materials you put together for us today. If there is no other business, I will declare us adjourned. (Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 o'clock a.m., November 29, 2000.)

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