

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
National Marine Fisheries Service
Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Meeting
Wednesday, October 19, 2022

The Council Coordination Committee met at the Holiday Inn - Capitol Hill, 550 C Street, SW, Washington, D.C., at 9:00 a.m., Michael Luisi, Chairman, Mid-Atlantic Council, presiding.

Council Members:

New England Council:

Eric Reid, Chair
Rick Bellavance, Vice-Chair
Tom Nies, Executive Director

Mid-Atlantic Council:

Michael Luisi, Chair
Wes Townsend, Vice-Chair
Chris Moore, Executive Director

South Atlantic Council:

Carolyn Belcher, Chair
Trish Murphy, Vice-Chair
John Carmichael, Executive Director

Caribbean Council:

Marcos Hanke, Chair
Carlos Fauchette
Miguel Rolon, Executive Director

Gulf of Mexico Council:

Dale Diaz, Chair
Greg Stunz, Vice-Chair
Carrie Simmons, Executive Director

Western Pacific Council:

John Gourley, Vice-Chair
Kitty Simmonds, Executive Director

Pacific Council:

Marc Gorelnik, Chair
Brad Pettinger, Vice-Chair
Peter Hassemer, Vice-Chair
Merrick Burden

North Pacific Council:

Bill Tweit, Vice-Chair
David Witherell, Executive Director

NOAA Fisheries Headquarters:

Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator for

Fisheries

Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator
for Regulatory Programs

Jim Landon, Director, Office of Law
Enforcement

Jon Hare, Science and Research Director,
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Adam Issenberg, NOAA Office of General
Counsel

Richard Methot, Senior Scientist for Stock
Assessments

Stephanie Hunt, Branch Chief NOAA
Fisheries Office of Communications:

Rebecca Ferro, Deputy Director

NOAA Fisheries Regions:

Jon Kurland, Alaska Regional Office

Sarah Malloy, Pacific Islands Regional Office

Korie Schaefer, West Coast Regional Office

Andy Strelchek, Southeast Regional Office

Michael Pentony, Greater Atlantic Regional
Office

Other participants:

Jessica Coakley, Mid-Atlantic Fishery
Management Council

Diana Evans, North Pacific Fishery
Management Council

José Montañez, Co Chair, MAFMC

Mary Sabo, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management
Council

Sandi Soderstrom, Office of the General
Counsel, U.S. Department of Commerce

Greg Stunz, CCC Representative to the Food
and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations, Committee on Fisheries
and Aquaculture

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Proceedings

9:00 a.m.

Chair Luisi: Okay, everyone, I have nine o'clock on my computer, and I think it's time that we can go ahead and get started. I would like to call this meeting of the Council Coordination Committee to order. Welcome back, everyone, for day two.

One thing I just want to mention before we get started with the presentations: I have a work conflict at 11 o'clock today, so Wes has graciously agreed to chair the second two, you know, the late-morning session, and I'll be back after lunch. So I just wanted you to -- everyone to know that. So thanks, Wes.

Okay, so I'm going to -- Kelly Denit is running a little late this morning, so Stephanie Hunt is going to be providing the presentation, Best Practices for Future of Hybrid Operations. So Stephanie, whenever you're ready.

Best Practices for Future of Hybrid Operations

Ms. Hunt: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. I'm Stephanie Hunt, I'm a Branch Chief in the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, and I'm helping Kelly this morning. She should be here maybe after I'm finished, so tell her I did a good job. Hopefully everybody enjoyed the trains passing in the night, got some good sleep, I didn't. Oh, am I presenting? Yes, I am. Okay. I get to do this, all right.

So our plan today is to talk about what you all are doing in this kind of new world. Both agency and councils have dramatically changed the way they've done business with COVID. And you all have been incredibly flexible and adaptable and creative.

And we're kind of entering a new territory and doing more hybrid meetings, and we thought it would be helpful to gather information and share what current practices are and see if anything bubbles up that might be considered best practices.

We gave you all a survey, and thank you so much for giving us good feedback. We asked about benefits and

barriers, so we'll talk about those. And then if coming out of this discussion, if there are things that do bubble up that you would consider best practices and you want to consider documenting them in some way, we can talk about that option.

So that's our plan today. I don't have any specific outcomes in mind, aside from sharing and hopefully learning from each other.

So these are the categories of questions that we asked. There were 21 questions, several of them were optional. And we received feedback from seven out of the eight councils. Really interesting information, I learned a lot personally. And I'll summarize that feedback in the next few slides.

Broadly, councils are now holding most of their meetings in person. Councils are allowing remote member participation in voting, mostly on an ad hoc basis at this point.

From what we learned in the survey, it doesn't sound like councils, any council is really holding true hybrid meetings which are kind of intentionally planned for a lot of people to be joining virtually and a lot of people to be there in person. It's more mostly in person with folks joining virtually when there's a reason to do, either they're sick or they have some conflict.

There's a lot of different approaches that councils are using that are quite interesting. One council is using remote council meetings for informational topics. Another council, or maybe the same one, is considering holding one full remote council a year, mostly to save on costs.

One council at the beginning of the pandemic hosted council members at various locations so they could gather together and then all join together virtually. That was at the beginning of the pandemic, isn't happening now, but I thought it was an interesting approach.

All the councils are allowing virtual public participation and comment, and I'll talk more about that in a couple of slides.

In terms of platforms and strategies here, the different

platforms folks are using. One council that uses Ring Central had good things to say about that, saying it works really well for large public meetings. And it allows video conferencing capability.

Also a lot of interesting strategies that you all implement to have effective virtual and hybrid meetings. One council has a staff person set up as -- designated as a help desk for the public to get in touch with to troubleshoot any issues.

One council has staff actually running the meeting at the council office together so that they can quickly address technological challenges and work together to address any problems. A council, in fact, I think several councils issue guidance memos laying out exactly how to join and how the meeting's going to run.

One council uses YouTube Live video stream for members of the public to participate or view the council meeting. And this eliminates the need for the public to download WebEx and other platforms. And it also reduces accidental unmutes and background noises.

And one council shared that for SSC meetings, they found the use of Google folders and shared Google docs for live editing to be super helpful. So then people can make edits together and weigh in.

In terms of voting, all councils are allowing members to vote virtually. Again, mostly on an ad hoc basis. There's a variety of formats that you all are using. One council, if there are members of the council joining remotely, they do voice voting for everyone.

Another council requires everybody that is sitting at the table and obviously remotely to be on the webinar. And they use the raise-hand function for any member of the council to comment and vote, so everybody's using the webinar.

One council is considering requiring in-person attendance for voting in the future. Another council is providing an online comment portal so that members can provide written comment before and during the meeting. And at least one council is considering electronic voting technology, which would be interesting

to hear more about.

In terms of public participation, part of the reason for this session is I think we all share the goal of having equitable access to council meetings and engaging the public as much as possible. So we're interested in how the public engages through this new virtual or hybrid setting.

A variety of ways -- a variety of approaches councils use. One council offers a variety of options for councils to participate and comment. For example, they can use email and e-portal, they can call in or they can comment by -- through the webinar.

One council requires the public to provide comment over the phone. They can join and watch the council meeting by webinar, but if they want to make a comment, they need to call in.

One council said that they prioritize in-person comments over comments coming in via webinar. And one council mentioned that most of their public participation occurs virtually.

We asked about trends in participation. Given the hybrid format and remote formats, have you seen an increase in public participation? And nobody's really truly tracking that. It was kind of a gut-check kind of answer. And certainly things have changed a lot from the very beginning of the pandemic to now.

But now it sounds like you're not seeing a major increase in public participation with online or virtual joining options. Really, agenda drives the participation. When there's controversial and important topics, more people join.

One council, at least one council, mentioned that having the public have an ability to join virtually for one topic, which is typically what they may be interested in, is really valuable so that they don't have to travel for a whole council meeting when they really just want to be there for one session. People also said they're seeing more in agency staff attend virtually.

Advisory bodies, we asked about how advisory body meetings are being held. There are a variety of formats.

This is the one I think we got the most diverse responses. Several councils hold advisory panel and SSC meetings remotely, especially for shorter meetings or for specific topics.

One council holds advisory body meetings either fully in person or fully remote but doesn't do hybrid meetings. In fact, several councils said that they discourage participation in advisory body meetings from afar. They encourage people to attend in person.

Several councils noted that public participation in advisory body meetings is particularly challenging. One council noted that they would -- they think that there would be more public participation in advisory body meetings if the public could join virtually, but they lack the staff and technology to do that.

We asked about advantages. Cost was cited as the biggest advantage or was cited as the biggest advantage among most of you. I think that probably refers more to remote meetings, significantly reduced for remote meetings.

Another, you know, huge value is that if somebody gets sick or, you know, tests positive for COVID and there's an important council meeting, they can still attend.

Folks talked about one advantage of holding virtual and hybrid meetings is that there's a huge loss in productivity for both staff and council members having to travel, especially if it's a short meeting, a one- or two-day meeting, it might require one or two full days of travel to get there, and that might not be cost-effective.

Similarly, just scheduling constraints, trying to get people together in person for a four-hour meeting and having to also then find time on either side of that for travel is challenging.

And I mentioned before that several councils cited the benefit of stakeholders being able to join for short parts of the meeting is a big benefit.

In terms of disadvantages and barriers, the majority of councils cited technological, IT, and staffing capacity as the biggest challenges. This is in part because hybrid meetings, even if it's just one or two people joining

virtually, councils have to backstop all their critical functions.

They have to plan for the worst. Because if a member is participating virtually, they need to participate virtually. And so it's a lot of work to get all those backstops in place, especially if only a couple of people join, that's a disadvantage.

Folks talked about council members who join virtually are sometimes at a disadvantage and it can slow the pace of meetings. There's not an ability for a quick, talk-to-your-neighbor to clarify an issue, so it can slow things down.

And another big challenge is lack of relationship-building, both between council members, but also between council members and the public.

Time zone challenges or time zone differences and internet reliability is a big issue for some councils. I think one interesting thing that came out as we think about allowing virtual and remote participation as a way to increase equity and access for more people to be able to join.

But some of the underserved communities that we're specifically thinking about may not have the internet or technology to actually join. So that is something to keep in mind.

And I'll note that one council said that they've been doing meetings with remote participations for long enough now that it's really not a -- there's no disadvantages they can see, it's kind of running smoothly.

We asked about costs as an optional question and we got some good feedback on that. One piece of information was that hybrid meetings can be more expensive for the reasons I talked about before. You need additional internet capacity, a lot more staffing capacity to make sure nothing goes wrong.

Nobody's actually, you know, doing a full accounting for costs, or certainly not in the timeframe that we gave you to fill out this survey. So I don't think we really have information about total costs, meaning how many people

don't attend and what are the travel savings costs, what are the per diem savings costs.

And so we don't have kind of a comprehensive view, but we did hear that from several, that hybrid meetings can be more expensive. And remote meetings are less expensive but there are still IT and administrative costs associated.

So that's the majority of the data. To summarize, councils are mostly holding their meetings in person and also allowing virtual participation, mostly on an ad hoc basis. I don't think anybody's holding true or traditional hybrid meetings where it's intentionally planned for a majority or a large number of people to be in both formats.

There are some really unique approaches being used, such as holding remote meetings for informational topics.

There is an allowance for virtual participation by all councils from members of the public, and there's a variety of approaches that you all are using. Similarly, there's a really wide variation in the structure of advisory body meetings, based on the survey results.

So that's the information from the survey. Some discussion questions. First, thank you so much for providing this information. Our goal there was to be able to summarize and present so that the majority of the time here can be spent on discussion.

So, one of the questions is, is there anything that you heard about today that you want to further explore? Did you hear ideas that are happening in other councils that you want to hear more about?

Another question is, given the IT and technology and staffing issues are the biggest barrier, are there opportunities for the councils to collaborate to address those issues in any creative way?

Similarly, did any issues or ideas bubble up that might be considered best practices, and if so, is there any desire to document those in any formal way, either in a best practices guidance document, a vision statement from the CCC, or something of that nature.

So those are some ideas of discussion questions. But really this is about you all learning from each other, and I'll turn it back to you.

Chair Luisi: Thank you very much -- very much, Stephanie. I think before I open the floor for discussion, if you could maybe expand a little bit on, I think there's a terminology that I'm -- the traditional hybrid meeting where -- I mean, I -- we use a hybrid in the mid-Atlantic. And you know, if somebody can't make the meeting, they're on -- they've on virtually.

But I'm not quite sure I understand this concept of most people are in both places. I don't know if you can expand on that a little bit.

Ms. Hunt: I can try. Yeah, I didn't articulate that well in part because it was actually somebody else's idea, maybe yours. Somebody said you, like, it depends on how you define hybrid meeting. And they gave me three different definitions of that.

And so in my mind, I'm thinking this is all relevant to any meeting that allows virtual participation. So I think all of this is relevant to that.

But it sounds like people were uncomfortable calling an in-person meeting where only like say two council members join virtually, that's not like a traditional hybrid meeting where it was, you know, it was intentionally planned.

Like totally up to you which way you -- how you want to join. And it would end up with a lot of people joining online and a lot of people in the room. So like half and half.

And I mean, I don't know that the distinction is that important, but it was brought up in the survey results that it was unclear. So that's why I mentioned it.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank you. Okay, I'm going to open the floor for discussion or questions, comments. Does anybody have anything they'd like to ask Stephanie or any comments you want to make at this time? Chris Moore?

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thanks, Stephanie.

I'll start.

Getting back to Mike's earlier point, this discussion of traditional/non-traditional hybrid meetings. I think probably we should just forget about the traditional part, right. And start thinking about what is it that we're talking about when we talk about a hybrid meeting.

And when we talk about it, we're talking about the hybrid portion of the meeting applying to the members, right. So whether it's the members of the council or the members of an AP or the members of the committee, that's the hybrid portion.

And when we think about a hybrid meeting, we're thinking about running two separate meetings, an in-person meeting and a virtual meeting, right. And it's difficult. And you saw what happened yesterday. And we try to avoid those situations with IT support and we do everything we can.

But the hybrid -- the hybrid meetings have been somewhat difficult for us. And I think, you know, one of your points talked about cost, right. So we need to keep that in mind. So it's not necessarily true that our costs are reduced by having a hybrid meeting, you know, depending on the circumstances.

We put, Mid-Atlantic Council has put, a lot of money into IT support, making sure that we have extra people at meetings, that we have the equipment, that we have everything that we need to make sure that things run as smoothly as possible.

But from our perspective, the hybrid is an ideal. The virtual participation part of it from the public is something that we think is important. And we've seen, I think again on the situation, increased attendance from the public. And that's certainly something that we want to continue to do. But we really do need to focus on the hybrid part of it.

And the other thing that is frustrating for us is that we'll hear, like for example, I'll say it directly, we had an SSC meeting recently. The members indicated that they really wanted to meet in person. And my cutoff for, you know, spending the money on a hotel and a room and

rooms for them is like 50%, right.

So we have 20 members, if ten of them say they're going to be there in person then we'll do it. We had two people -- or, no, four people show up for that particular meeting. So it was a waste of money. And you know, the meeting went well, we got what we wanted out of the meeting. But the in-person part of it not so much.

And it's really, again, from our perspective that we focus and highlight the in-person part of our meetings. Because a lot of important things happen when people are around a table and you can see each other. Those are my comments, thanks.

Chair Luisi: All right, thanks, Chris. Anyone else? Merrick.

Mr. Burden: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Stephanie.

I'll echo a lot of what Chris just indicated. I'd also add that as we think about hybrid, I think it's important to first think about the structure of the meeting that we are -- that we have.

And so in our council process we have a, for example, a very structured council meeting itself where we follow Robert's Rules, we speak into mics like this, we raise our hand.

And in that environment, a hybrid format, although I still have the opinion that in-person is far better, the hybrid format works pretty well, as long as most council members are in person. That's my perspective. I think it's shared here.

Our adjacent advisory body meetings are done quite a bit differently, and the reason is because our advisory bodies are in an ideation mode and a problem-solving mode. And so it's a much more free-flowing discussion, and that's intentional. And in that format, this model we have here in front of us now with push-to-talk mics, that just doesn't work.

And so we have, you know, a live, it's called an Owl that we use. It has a camera and a mic in it, and we use that. It tries to track the discussion. And it doesn't really

work.

We've pieced it together, and at one point we had, I think it was our June meeting, we had a few advisory bodies where half were remote and half were in person.

And we had our staff officers set up, they look like DJs and they're trying to, you know, move mics around, get people to talk. And it took them completely out of the discussion, and they're an important part of those committees. We're not going to do that again, that just didn't work.

And so as we think about hybrid, I think it's important to say what is the format of the meeting and how is that conducive to achieving what that body, be it the council or the advisory body, is trying to do. And is hybrid of any type appropriate for that. And in some cases the answer is just no, in my opinion. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank. Going to go to Kitty next, and then Bill. Go ahead, Kitty.

Ms. Simonds: So thanks for your presentation. But in terms of collaboration, I don't think we can collaborate with anyone or any other council can collaborate with us because we work in three time zones. So both hybrid and virtual meetings are difficult.

For example, if we had a meeting in Honolulu and it's 9:00 a.m., then it's 8:00 a.m. in American Samoa. But then it's 5:00 a.m. the next day in the Marianas. So we, when we get all virtual we have to start the meeting at 11:00 a.m. to be fair so that it would just 7:00 a.m. the next day in the Marianas.

But then our State Department rep, so that's six hours ahead. So it's 5:00 p.m., and so he stays on the line till 11:00 at night.

So it's difficult. And so as I said, in terms of collaboration, we just have to do our own thing. There's no one that can really help us in terms of making, you know, making it better or whatever. So I just wanted to mention that.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Kitty. Bill.

Mr. Tweit: Just note for the record that nobody is better at doing their own thing than Kitty.

(Laughter.)

Ms. Simonds: Thank you very much.

Mr. Tweit: But I did have a couple other thoughts. Two of them. One is it just feels to me like it might be really early for best practices. I'm not sure it will ever really work anyway because of exactly the dynamic that Kitty described.

We're discovering both the strengths and weaknesses of this approach too, but for very different reasons, I mean very different circumstances. But certainly our interest in increasing our accessibility to remote communities that are very difficult to travel from, very expensive to travel from, and yet people care a lot about what we're doing, that's a great thing.

But we don't feel like we really have it nailed yet. And I don't know, it may take another couple years before the technology really is there. I mean, that's going to take extending broadband into some pretty remote parts of Alaska as well.

So just the technology alone. But also we're going to be continuing to experiment. You've heard Merrick describe something that just flopped. We've had a few things along those lines too. And so we're going to be continuing to experiment for a couple more years.

And in that environment, I'm not sure best practices are really something to be thinking about yet. I know the EDs in particular have a lot of ad hoc communication going on about what's working and what's not.

And because we routinely hear when we say, well, what about trying this, you know, we routinely hear from David and Diane knows as well, council X tried it and dot dot dot.

So, I'm reassured that a lot of that cross-council communication is happening flexibly and as needed to solve particular problems.

I do worry, and maybe I'll just use this as an

opportunity to bring that up about encouraging councils in particular to just simply focus on the saving money part of the capacities of virtual meetings.

And what keeps coming back to my mind from that year and a half of having to do council meetings from my own home is just the difference in what it feels like after you take a tough vote. When you're in person and you take a tough vote, you have to walk out into that hallway.

When you're remote and you take a tough vote, you go grab another cup of coffee. It's totally different. And that alone, I mean, that may seem like a small thing, but there's a huge sense of essentially accountability to the -- to the council process that comes with that.

And so if it -- if it does in the long run looks like it still costs more to have councils operating in person, so what.

That's a small thing compared to a council that sort of becomes a group of anonymous people that most stakeholders can't reach right away in any meaningful way, and who don't have to face people one on one, or one crowd is usually the case in the halls afterwards.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Bill. I have a couple hands on this side of the table. I'm just going to run down the table, start with Eric, and then John, I'll come to you next.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And just a comment about participation, which I think participation is the wrong word. Certainly in hybrid meeting, attendance is higher. But I am not thinking that participation is any higher at all. I think it's misleading to say that, oh, well, you know, public participation is up.

Well, the numbers might be up, but we got 32 people online right now, we got nobody in the audience but staff. But most likely not -- those people are not going to participate, and maybe some of them are out cutting the grass but their name is, you know, they're in attendance.

So it's a misnomer, and it's misleading, and it shouldn't be taken as gospel. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Eric. John.

Mr. Carmichael: Yeah, thanks, I agree, I don't think we're ready for best practices. I think we need to continue to innovate and find out what works best in our regions.

In our case, we've probably never done a traditional hybrid as it's defined. We went back to in-person meetings and everyone was ready to be there.

And I think at most during this year since we went back last December we've had two voting members that were not at a meeting, and usually for personal reasons, medical, etc. Which we've allowed for five or ten years.

We've been webcasting for a really long time and done remote participation by presenters, which is one of the hard things. Because like Chris said, we've also invested in IT and doing as good as we can in the meeting room to integrate remote people into the system. But you have no control over that person and their other end.

And you know, at our recent council meeting, probably 50-50 as far as being able to really effectively hear remote presenters. And you know, I don't mean to call out, but it was NMFS people that really struggled a couple times.

And you know, I think part of that is just that, you know, you guys are under a lot of IT restrictions that we in councils are not. And I know that sometimes that can really affect, you know, the ability and the technology that you have at your access, you know. So that's just kind of a problem.

And if someone's giving a presentation and folks can't hear him the room, they're just going to kind of, you know, zone out. So that's the real problem.

And then I hear it's such a disadvantage if 12 people are in person and one's remote. And folks recognize that. But then if it became a regular thing, you know, if you're a representative for a group of constituents, you know, I think those constituents deserve to get the best representation they can.

And someone who is a, you know, appointed council member has, you know, decided, well, I'm just really not going to travel because I don't want to, then I think

that potentially puts the people they represent at a loss. And I think that's an important consideration as well.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, John. Miguel, then Marcos, then I'll come down to you, Dale.

Mr. Rolon: Yeah, we had the same experience as everybody else. But I also agree with the concept of well, we are not there yet to have a uniform way of doing business. We are talking hybrid.

In our case we started what we used to call hybrid with GoTo Meeting a long time ago. So we had people participating through the internet. At that time, we were not allowed to vote. And that, after the pandemic, that's the only concern that we have.

Anybody from the council or advisory body is allowed to vote. Before it was present and able to vote, not by remote. And if that is clear, then we don't have anything to add.

Except sometimes I'm afraid that when I start talking about these kind of things, all of a sudden we have a group from Washington, this is the way you should be doing it.

And at this time, I agree that we all copy from each other what is best. For the executive director, we are always in contact. Did you work with this and that.

And I believe that we are too early in the game to come up with a uniform way of operating. I believe that it should be at the discretion of each council how you would like to do it.

We all favor to have more in-person meetings that we are trying so we're here all around the table. And we are the smallest council, and still we have to invest in the equipment like everybody else. But most people prefer to come to the meeting so they can participate.

The other part is that when you have public hearings and meetings that you need to get the info from the public, in our neck of the woods, people like to do it in person. They hate the virtual thing.

Because most fishermen would like to see eye to eye,

this is what I want to tell you this, this and that, Miguel, and I want to see your reaction. And we have taken that into consideration.

So all our council meetings will be hybrid. All the SSCs and it will be hybrid. But to have public hearings and workshops and scoping meetings, they will be mostly all in person.

Got to have a very important, you know, sickness or something for a person to participate virtually because we are not going to have facilities for virtual meetings at the places that we have all the meetings.

So do you have internet in the middle of nowhere? So Puerto Rico is very small, but still, you don't have internet all over the place. Anyway, thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thank you. Marcos.

Mr. Hanke: Yes, I agree for sure what Miguel said. And I want to also express my gratitude to him on his leadership on our council to make sure the ball kept rolling during the COVID situation. And I'm really glad that you did the job you did, Miguel, a leader, as a leader of this.

And I make little paragraph that I want to read, and there is a few things here maybe I didn't found the right words. Please be kind to me.

CFMC responded well during the challenge during COVID-19. We are -- we were upfront like always, engaging and enhancing participation in any circumstance. Council chief continued -- kept doing business on fishery management.

Hybrid meeting, it's a good complementary tool now, and it will be on the future what is, you just add to it. It is a complementary tool the way I see it.

Virtual meeting, this the word that I didn't found a better word to describe, is a bully tool used by savvy tech participants or organization with good access to internet or else, which is contradictory when the intention is to receive inputs respecting all stakeholders that fall in the EEJ's aspects of the new discussion that we are having now of fair participation.

As a chair and staff, I guarantee that we made everything we could and we keep doing for that not to be the case. But virtual meeting represent a challenge on that part.

And I will leave you with a question: what is a quality participation? If you answer that question, you're going to probably get to the same conclusion I got that virtual and hybrid meetings are just a complementary add-on tool to this discussion. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thank you. Dale.

Mr. Diaz: Thank you, Mr. Chair. John made the main point that I wanted to make a minute ago that, you know, virtual presentations, a percentage of them are not quality sound on our end that we are able to receive. We've upgraded our equipment, but a lot of times the problem's on the other end.

And Stephanie, thank you for your presentation. But you made the point that sometimes we say two days of travel for people going to a meeting.

Well, if we save that money for people going to a meeting but on the other end we waste 30 minutes of council time and the information that we're getting for a presentation, it's obviously important. We wouldn't invest 30 minutes of council time for a presentation if it wasn't.

And if that information doesn't get relayed effectively, have we accomplished anything? So anyway, I really do not like the virtual presentations because we can't predict which ones are going to be effective and are effective. So thank you.

Chair Luisi: Marcos, could you turn off your microphone.

Mr. Hanke: Yes.

Chair Luisi: Anyone else who hasn't had a chance to speak yet? Carrie.

Dr. Simmons: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the presentation, Stephanie.

I think one way we've tried to improve the presenters,

you know, the council members, we're all down. We practice with them, we knew what kind of technology they had.

But in more recent history, we know the agenda, we know who those presenters are. You know, our admin staff tries to set up a practice session with them to see how the technology's going to work.

That's a huge time suck on their end. And sometimes we can work through it, and sometimes we can't. There may be bad internet, like Dale was saying, on their side of things. But I think for that part of it, we've made improvements there.

As far as best practices go, for us, I think one thing we're still struggling with for the most part is public participation virtually. It can be very, very disruptive to council meetings because we have no control the platform that person is using.

It could be a telephone, it could be a tablet, it could be their computer. They could be driving down the interstate, they could be going out to sea.

And it's not very effective if we can't hear them at all in these huge meeting rooms. So that's one thing for us internally I think we could work on as far as best practices go.

The other thing to keep in mind I think if we're going to talk about public participation is defining that, what does that mean, and putting a metric to it. Does that mean just a new person got online?

Does that mean a new person got online and provided public testimony? Does that mean they were signing up for our press releases? What does that mean? So I think we need to define that as we're using as terms moving forward. Thanks.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Carrie. Yeah, Mark.

Mr. Gorelnik: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think what I've heard is that going down the road of best practices is fraught with some danger.

Because we have eight different councils here, each with

separate challenges with regard to stakeholders and the fisheries they manage and geographic and cultural diversity. So we need to be careful there.

But I think a point that was touched on here has to do with presentations, and I think that's important as well as public participation. It's -- we can't regulate the public.

You're right, Carrie, people can be driving down the interstate. And it's great that we're providing this easier access for folks to provide their public testimony.

If we could say, if we require them to sit in one place in front of a good microphone, that would be great. I don't know that we can do that with the public.

But that's not the case with agencies. And I think that oftentimes we get quite a varied audio quality in those presentations.

And I think that an area for best practices may be that for agencies, whether they be state or federal agencies, to internally adopt a best practice for themselves for when they're providing a remote presentation so that their audio quality is good, their equipment is good. So we're not straining to understand what's being said in a -- and being distracted in the course of the valuable time on the council floor.

With regard to participation versus attendance, we at the Pacific Council have long offered -- we've often long-streamed our meetings virtually. So people have been able to attend our meetings without even, you know, prior to COVID.

And so I think the key thing here is participation. Are we getting more public testimony? And I think that's the metric, rather than how many people have logged in -- logged into the meeting. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Mark. I'm going to come back to Eric Reid.

Mr. Reid: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Gorelnik touched on what I -- what I'd like to know is we've already heard from the councils, but you know what's the policy going forward from our federal partners for

participation? What's the plan, what's the policy from them?

Chair Luisi: Jim.

Mr. Landon: Sure, hey, I can take that one. So and I'm going to steal a line from Kristen's presentation yesterday where she said the ocean today, the ocean environment today is not the -- is not the same ocean environment that was many years ago. And everyone kind of shook their head and agreed with that.

The work environment today is not the same work environment that was five years ago, all right. So just like you all around this time to lead through the challenges of that changing ocean environment, I would suggest the same approach to the changing work environment.

I think hybrid for NOAA is -- we are embracing that hybrid work environment. And hybrid is in person, in virtual in some combination, that would be my basic definition, all right.

So for me, you know, we have our reintegration plan. Our approach is steady, safe, flexible. It takes on CDC guidance, it takes on local conditions. But it balances that health and safety of our employees with achieving that mission.

And I would suggest that perhaps the one best practice is one that should resonate with everyone, and that's that proper prior planning kind of mantra. And what we've heard today is we need to think about how to do this, how to do it better. And I do think we will get better at it.

But the planning, yes, it's a challenge to do. Perhaps check out the technology, figure out what platforms are going to be utilized, encourage those.

You know, I know we had a problem with Zoom a few -- at the start of the pandemic, and we worked through that. Just a -- and so I offer that as a suggestion as we're going to get better as we do this.

I think we only get better by running into an obstacle and figuring out a way around it. And so, as I said,

encourage that, we continue to do this.

We figure out, you know, try to anticipate those obstacles and come up, if you will, with how to do hybrid meetings in way that basically addresses those challenges. So that would be my, you know, my approach is hybrid for us.

But I would also caveat that in that planning process, if you have determined that this absolutely needs to be an in-person or we need to have representation there in person, and I would suggest, you know, I would -- those instances may be few and far between or few and far of what -- of what you think as a, quote, traditional.

But I would challenge you that think about those in that planning process. Yeah, it's going to require more than just the morning of the council meeting I'm going to log in and then I realize that I can't connect to whatever that platform is or I have a problem. So yeah, so we need to probably anticipate that and troubleshoot and try to find that best practice.

But from our perspective that hybrid approach is what we need to try to figure out. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chair Luisi: Thank you, Eric.

Mr. Reid: Yeah, forgive for -- hope you can hear me through this George Jetson sound system that we got going here. I'm not really sure if I got an answer that I really wanted.

I mean, all the councils around this table are expressing the importance of being in person. Certainly the work environment has changed. Whether the work ethic has changed or not, I think it has as well.

But you know, we require a lot of data. This is a data-hungry group, which means reports. And reports are critical at any council meeting, you know, especially contentious issues and even ones that are not. And I really think that embracing a hybrid technology is not necessarily acceptable because, you know, we've got to get the job done.

We're all in this room and we're all committed to getting the job done. And we're saying that for us in person is

critical. So I really suggest that you try to embrace our policy a little bit more, if you could. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: All right, thanks, Eric. John.

Mr. Carmichael: Yeah, to kind of follow up on that, we had a recent experience that illustrates some of the real challenges that get created. We put on an assessment data workshop. This is a large operation, a weeklong, breakout groups. People from states, universities, SSCs, APs, science centers of course.

And it's really hard to participate remotely in that sort of thing with a lot of things going on. And we had a group, including important analysts, that decided not to participate in person. You know, there's no travel restrictions, so it's really just a personal choice of saying, you know, we're not going to travel.

And it was a major impediment to the process of the meeting. And there's been fallout since because, you know, folks who weren't there feeling like they weren't involved in all the discussions and maybe not satisfied with some of the decisions or the justification.

So there's been demands for additional follow-up webinar meetings to go around bushes again that were already covered at the meeting.

And that's the real concern about some of these things when you have people that make a choice not to show up, but then dictate to a larger group of maybe 30, 40 other people that accommodations be made for them after the fact to go through that.

And I think that's a real problem in, you know, and here I'm speaking of our SEDAR process. And one of the real innovations of that was the data workshop and fisherman coming in and seeing how hard all the scientists work to get the best data that they could, you know. That was the real important thing that was done here.

And I'm really afraid that as key participants, you know, maybe decide that well, we just don't really want to travel to these meetings anymore, that, you know, that's going to be lost. And that good will that was built up in that really important understanding that, you

know, maybe you don't understand all the scientists.

But you see how hard these guys work and how committed they are to putting, you know, the best information on the table and making the best of the data they have kind of gets lost as people go back into their offices.

And you don't have that face-to-face time. You don't have that person relationship building. And it really concerns me for kind of the long-term success of our assessment endeavors.

And looking at the GAO report, we have an awful long ways to go in the Southeast as far as getting assessment output compared to the other science centers, even science centers that are funded not as well or have as many people as ours are doing better.

So I just don't feel that we can really survive, you know, with a greater loss of trust than we have now.

Chair Luisi: Okay, yes. I can't see your name. Andy.

Mr. Strelcheck: Yeah, Andy Strelcheck. Appreciate all the points that have been made. I think we're getting to a best practice here in some respects in terms of the comments that are just offered.

And I think the challenge for the Agency and what Jim was saying is that there is value in a hybrid work environment. But as everyone around the table is also saying, there's a lot of value in that in-person interaction. So where's that balance?

And you know, an example like John just provided where we may have had a key analyst that should have been in a meeting for multiple days not show up for a variety of reasons. You know, that to me is, you know, an opportunity lost and probably not well-suited for a hybrid meeting or even, you know, not attending at all.

But, you know, budget-limited environment, the presentations that we got yesterday. You know, I'm also looking carefully with my leadership team to decide, okay, are we going to send someone to a meeting that might have a 15-minute presentation during the meeting or have a small role in the meeting when they

could actually attend virtually and be participatory in that virtual role.

So to me this is something I think that we need to continue to have a conversation around with the councils, with NMFS leadership. Certainly as we're preparing for meetings, recommendations in terms of staff participation in person it would be very helpful as well to hear from the councils on key issues.

And Clay and myself in the south region, Southeast region, can obviously focus on that from our staff perspectives as well. So thanks for the comments.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank you very much for those comments. I don't see any other hands -- well, go ahead, Chris.

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So listening to Andy's comments, which I appreciate, and Jim's earlier answer to Eric's question, you know, sitting here wondering who -- who has the burden of deciding who should come to a meeting as it relates to an in-person participation, right.

So Andy, you suggest, you know, we're working through a process and we need think about. But is it really, is it something that you want the councils to do?

Like, you know, we're having a council meeting and these are the things that we're going to be talking. And it would be really great if the following individuals from your, you know, organization would be there in person.

Is that something that we're talking about, or is it an awareness from NMFS's leadership that in fact, you know, these people need to be there in person without, you know, having to sit around actually with the councils.

So I'm just wondering, you know, again since we're openly talking about this today, trying to figure out maybe a process, you know, what are your thoughts.

Mr. Strelcheck: So in response to that, I think it's a combination of both, right. I think us as NMFS leadership might put a different value on someone's participation than you would, right, as a council director or a council member. And so it's good to hear that,

because if we're not aligned in terms of their participation, we need to know that.

In the same light, obviously, we can talk to you upfront about who we're planning on sending to the meeting and advise early in the process so that we have sufficient participation. And if there's not alignment there, to let us know, right.

So I think that's the challenge. And then it gets back there are resource considerations, right, that we all need to be factoring into these decisions.

Chair Luisi: Chris.

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just quickly. So you know, one thing that we haven't talked about is the travel policy that NMFS now has, right. Is there -- so you know, if you and I had a conversation, and I said, you know, hey John really needs to be at this meeting, Andy.

Is there a policy restriction that you would say, you know what, we're not really allowed to travel now, or we can only travel under these circumstances or only, you know, ten percent of my folks are allowed to travel?

You know, what -- what is it? I mean, is there anything in there that would be an impediment to a decision that you and I made relative to having a person attend in person?

Mr. Strelcheck: The primary impediment would be COVID community spread levels and if they reach, you know, the high red levels as identified by the CDC. Because that then triggers, you know, only mission-critical travel, right.

So there's a grey area in terms of how that's defined, but you know, that would be the most limiting of circumstances in terms of community spread levels like we're currently in. There are no constraints on travel that are being imposed related to COVID.

Chair Luisi: Okay. All right, at this time, I think I'm going to move on. Stephanie, I did see your hand, did you have one last comment to make?

Ms. Hunt: I just wanted to say thanks for all the input. I heard loud and clear that best practices, we're not ready for that. And I didn't mean to -- to make you think that we were pushing that. It was an idea. I totally agree and I really appreciate the valuable input and discussion here.

And again, I think we've been so impressed by the councils and what you've done with meeting your mission obligations with really dramatic changes in the environment, and we have a lot to learn from you.

I wish we had gotten some best practices from Chris and others who have hosted this meeting. We're clearly, you know, working through our own technological challenges.

So I think it's so great that you all are talking with each other, that the EDs are sharing. That's kind of the best practices that we had in our mind is to make sure that those conversations were happening. And it sounds like they are, so that's really great. Thanks.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Stephanie.

At this time, I'd like to close that item on today's agenda and move on to the second item, which is preventing harassment in councils. And I believe, Adam, you're starting that presentation. And then we also have Sandi Soderstrom, who will be online on the webinar to help answer questions.

So I want to turn it over to you, Adam.

International Issues

Ms. Cole: Thanks very much, and thanks for your patience. I had a presentation in Silver Spring this morning. So I was racing here to get here on time, and I heard you're ahead of schedule. I've got to remember my clicker.

So I'm going to speak about a couple of different issues, some of which you asked me about, some of which I've just decided to tell you about to cover some of the international updates since we last spoke. You'll see on here we have two topics related to the Indo-Pacific, both the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Indo-Pacific Economic

Framework. Give you an update on the most recent round of discussions under BBNJ.

Give you some updates related to our Marine Mammal Import Provision. Updates as well related to the Moratorium Protection Act, the Maritime SAFE Act, WECAFC, and the WTO Fisheries Subsidy Agreement. So I will try to move through these briskly and try to take questions at the end. But if there's anything that I'm being patently unclear about or moving too quickly on, feel free to flag me down and I can stop as we're going through.

So Indo-Pacific Strategy, we hear there's a lot of confusion between the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The Indo-Pacific Strategy was issued by the White House in February 2022. It articulates a policy to pursue an Indo-Pacific that is free, open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.

The action plan to implement the strategy includes partnering to build resilience in the Pacific Island including cooperation to improve maritime security to safeguard fisheries and build maritime domain awareness. So it is an aspirational level document with an action plan to try and implement those high level aspirations of the strategy. That is different than the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework known as IPEF, which is not a good acronym.

It is -- in late May 2022, the administration launched its first major trade initiative, and that is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. This was launched in Tokyo as I said in May of 2022. So it is a recent effort.

It is an effort to try to expand U.S. economic leadership in the Indo-Pacific region. There are 13 countries that account for approximately 40 percent of the global economy. That includes the United States obviously, but Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. I think Taiwan had hoped to join but was not invited as I understand it.

It is not going to be a free trade agreement. But it is going to go through that same type of process and steps

that are followed by USTR when they negotiate an active free trade agreement. But they're going to negotiate it as a trade promotion under the Trade Promotion Authority.

There are four key pillars under IPEF which you can see on the screen, a connected economy, a resilient economy, a clean economy, and a fair economy. So Pillar 1 is also known as the trade pillar. That is going to be led by USTR and cover three general issues: digital trade, labor, and the environment.

NOAA Fisheries is represented on these discussions through the trade promotion TPSC -- through the TPSC Committee -- Trade Promotion Committee on agriculture. So we are engaging on Pillar 1. The other three pillars are focused on a resilient economy.

That's supply chain challenges that are creating rules that can help companies quickly respond to disruptions in trade like we've seen in recent years. So some of those may touch on agricultural and fisheries issues, but we're not that involved. But we are keeping an eye on Pillar 2.

Pillar 3 is a clean economy. That's where climate-related issues such as renewable energy, decarbonization, carbon removal, energy efficiency standards, methane efficiency standards. And that's being led by the Department of Commerce.

And so we, again, will be keeping -- there may be agricultural fisheries issues. But NOAA Fisheries is keeping an eye on it. But it is being led by the Department. So we'll be kept in the loop. And Pillar 4 is fair economy which is focused on tax and anticorruption policies. And again, that's being led by the Department of Commerce in collaboration with the Department of Treasury.

So the first ministerial was just held in September, September 8th to 9th in Los Angeles. And it was going to build -- it built on those constructive meetings that they've been having in the virtual framework up until then. At the conclusion of that meeting, they reached a consensus on some ministerial statements for each of the four pillars.

So I think that right now that ministerial text for the trade pillar is still under development. And we've had some opportunities to engage with the Department and others on that. So this is very much a new initiative.

It is very much in nascent stages. And we are looking to see where it's going to go in making sure that fisheries issues are represented as appropriate in IPEF. It is something that the Secretary has reached out to NOAA directly on, and we have provided some information. It also has included some efforts related to Jim's Office of Law Enforcement and some of the work being done in our office on capacity building with some of the countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Next up is BBNJ. And last time I spoke with you, we were getting ready for what was supposed to be the fifth and final session. I'm pretty sure what I said was it will definitely be the fifth. But it may not be the final.

In order to make it still possibly the final, they didn't close the session even though they didn't finish their work. So they will be resuming the fifth session in, we believe now, early January. So they came close to reaching agreement, but they were unable to finalize it.

So we will be having another fifth session or the second part of the fifth session in January. The issues remained similar to what we have engaged in before. These negotiations as you all probably recall have been happening since 2006. So if we actually do reach a point of finality in January, that will be a big accomplishment and a big step forward.

On area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, we had discussions related to as we've discussed before the role of international fishery bodies and how BBNJ are going to interact on establishing any area-based area such as marine protected areas and what those consultations with stakeholders will look like. Talking about what that role of the science and technology body will. And trying to figure out exactly what the decision-making mechanisms will be and what possibilities there will be for objection mechanisms.

So we don't know yet whether we're going to get a revised text to review prior to that session in January or

whether we will be working off the drafts as they were coming out of the last session in August. If we get new text, my guess is that there will be stakeholder meetings. Probably State Department will have stakeholder meetings as they have before each session regardless of whether or not we have new text.

So keep an eye out for notices about those meetings. They'll come around as they always have been. We're coming down to the wire on the negotiations. So this is a point where there's a lot of give and take, trying to see what is necessary to get to the final agreement.

We have been working really hard to make sure that the fisheries issues are remaining in the front of their mind to make sure that the role of domestic management processes and the roles of the regional fishery management organizations are not undermined through this process. But as we've talked about, these are all sort of nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. So we're working hard to hold those lines with our colleagues from the State Department. But we will see where that lands.

The big issue about decision making process, it would allow BBNJ Conference of the Parties to take decisions on establishing them. But it would have some limitations for how those are going to be conveyed to the regional fishery management organization. So there can be recommendations coming out of the COP that would go to the regional fishery management organizations.

The question would be what happens if the regional fishery management organization doesn't act on those recommendations. And that's still an open negotiation point. So those are sort of the big pieces which is going to be those objection procedures and decision making procedures and then some emergency measure provisions that are still under discussion. So more to come.

MMPA Import Provisions or otherwise known as the bane of my existence, as you know, we are working on a process. I think we're coming up on year 6, possibly year 7 of implementing these import restrictions whereby countries are required to provide us information about their regulatory and statutory

provisions that they have to prevent the bycatch of marine mammals so that we can analyze it to determine their comparability with U.S. standards. All countries were required to provide us their information by last November.

Almost every country did that exports products that have marine mammal bycatch to us with the exception of four minor trading partners. My team has been in the process of conducting 2,500 comparability findings since we received them all. Those are slow going I would say if we do it by fishery, by country.

So it is not a single decision for any given country. If a country has 100 fisheries, they can be found comparable in 75 and not comparable on 25. And it would only be products from those 25 not comparable fisheries that would not come in to the United States.

The original deadlines were that we would publish our decisions on November 30th this year for implementation on January 1, 2023. I can't give you the final details yet. But we expect to have a Federal Register notice out in the next week or so that will extend those deadlines. The team simply hasn't been able to get through the 2,500 comparability findings as quickly as we might have hoped.

And so there will be some increase time frame in terms of the date that the import restrictions will go into effect and the date by which we will publish them. One of the other elements that is under consideration in this Federal Register notice is perhaps having a greater time period between the date on which we publish the comparability determinations and the date on which they come into effect. We have heard from industry that having longer than 30 days would be beneficial and would make it more easy to come into compliance with or easier to come into compliance with.

Our High Seas Driftnet Fishing Moratorium Protection Act or what we call our MSRA process, so we issue a report to Congress every two years. Our last report was issued in August of 2021. Our next report is due in June of 2023.

In that report, we identify countries for engaging in IUU

fishing for bycatch and protected living marine resources or directed shark catch. In our 2021 report, we made certification decisions on the countries we had identified in 2019 report. Of note there, was that we negatively certified Mexico which meant that port denials went into effect for Mexico for products related to the vessels that are fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, the launch of vessels that are fishing illegally in the U.S. EEZ.

Port denials went into effect last February 7th. And they also have the potential to have import restrictions. Those are at the discretion of the President.

We are required to make a recommendation. And we are working with the interagency team to finalize that recommendation as to whether or not import restrictions should go into effect and get that up to the President soon, I hope. So that is still out there as a potential.

We also identified 28 nations for bycatch. We had only ever identified one country previously. And this time, we identified 28 countries. They were all ICCAT member countries.

We focused on longline fisheries interacting with sea turtles because we took that as our highest priority and we looked at the tuna RFMOs and WCPFC and IATTC in the Pacific. Both had existing measures for bycatch mitigation related to sea turtles and ICCAT did not. And so it was the ICCAT member countries that ended up being identified in this report.

Identification has led to two years of consultations with those countries that we are in the middle of engaging in those consultations. We will have to make a certification determination for our June 2023 report. Positive certification, their world is good. Negative certification, port denials would go into effect and they have the potential for import restrictions.

I would also note for -- I just came from the ICCAT Advisory Committee meeting this morning where I was presenting on this. Countries that may receive a positive certification could also potentially be identified again if they have not yet been able to fully put into place the necessary bycatch mitigation measures to be comparable to those of the United States. As you are

well aware, adopting regulations or changing statutes takes time, can't always be accomplished in a two-year period.

So it is possible that countries could receive a positive certification if we feel that they have taken sufficient steps to move in that direction and then be identified again if they have not yet been able to complete a process. We are also hopeful that ICCAT might adopt a measure this year. We always think multilateral action is better than us having to take unilateral action.

If ICCAT adopts a measure, we will have to take a look at that measure and see if it is comparable to that which the United States does and see if that helps resolve the problem for those ICCAT member countries. So we're working on that. The other piece I would just flag is we do have a Federal Register notice that is out in the world that is soliciting any information relating to IUU fishing, bycatch or protected living marine resources, or directed shark catch on the high seas.

That's the information that will help feed into our new set of identifications in the June 2023 report. That Federal Register notice is open until December 31st. If you like that link, let me know and we can pass that over.

Oh, it's at the end of the presentation. So if the presentation gets shared, the link is actually in the presentation. I talked right beyond my slides since I don't follow along that well. So we'll keep moving from there to the Maritime SAFE Act.

In December of 2019, the Maritime SAFE Act was enacted. And one of the primary things that it did, it established a 21 interagency working group on IUU fishing to try and create a whole of government group to address issues related to IUU fishing. It is co-chaired by NOAA, the State Department, and the Coast Guard.

NOAA is holding the chair right now, and it will pass to one of our sister agencies in June. We are pretty excited. Literally as we speak, our five-year strategic plan is rolling out into the world.

We have been working on this five-year strategic plan

for not quite five years. But it feels like five years. And this strategic plan outlines rally our whole of government approach to how we hope to address IUU fishing.

It identifies some priority countries or administrations I have to say because it includes Taiwan. These are not necessarily the countries that we think are the worst offenders of IUU fishing. These are countries that have an IUU fishing problem.

Either their vessels are engaged in it, or IUU fishing is happening in their waters that we believe have shown the greatest interest and commitment to working with us to address the problem. And so the five countries or administrations that are identified are Ecuador, Panama, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam. And so the strategic plan does have some focus on those priority countries or administrations and activities that the whole U.S. government intends to engage in to work with them.

So we're very excited about getting our strategic plan out into the world. It was due in December 2021. So we are a little bit late, but it's off to Congress today.

And I think -- I don't know that the link is in here. But if anyone -- because it wasn't public when we created the PowerPoint. But if anyone is interested in seeing that presentation, we certain can provide the link. It's going to be published on our website and available for anyone.

So when I came to speak in -- I think it was May, our last meeting, we talked a little bit about WECAFC. I wanted to provide a little bit of an update since that time. I think staff from my office have engaged at the Caribbean, the Gulf, and the South Atlantic Councils in August and September of this year.

I appreciate the time you gave them on your agendas to speak to some of these issues. We really appreciate that. We recently had the meeting in September of WECAFC, the 18th annual session.

And so we are also really interested in trying to get input from the various councils before the first meeting of the Flying Fish-Dolphinfish Working Group, which is tentatively scheduled for 2023. So the work is moving

along with WECAFC. We've been having some conversations with our colleagues in the South Atlantic to try and in the southeast region, both at the science center and the regional office to talk about ways that we can continue to support this work.

I just really wanted to express my gratitude for your continuing input into this process. And please don't hesitate to reach out if there's more information that we can provide on any of these issues and as WECAFC continues to develop new measures. So I think -- oh, I forgot the WTO subsidies agreement.

So as many of you probably saw in the press, after 20 years, the WTO fishery subsidy agreement was concluded. Those negotiations concluded in June. As you can see on the screen, it does prohibit the provision of subsidies to vessels or operators that are engaged in IUU fishing to fishing or fishing-related activities regarding an overfished stock and also to fishing or fishing-related activities on the unregulated high seas.

So this agreement won't come into effect until it's been ratified by two-thirds of the WTO members. So we are still a little bit of a ways away from it actually coming into effect. We're now working actively within NOAA and in consultation with our colleagues at USTR and the Department of State to think about what we can do and how quickly we can move to ratifying it and looking at what impacts it will have on us domestically and if there are any changes that we need to make to any of our regulatory programs.

So I think those are the updates I wanted to provide. Happy to take any questions if you have any questions on that. Or if you want to reach me, you can always reach me there. Thanks.

Mr. Townsend: Thank you for the presentation. Any questions? Marcos?

Mr. Hanke: Alexa, thank you very much for including the Caribbean in these conversations. And I want to take this opportunity because right now we have issues addressing the queen conch. There is an ESA process going on with the queen conch.

And when you are addressing trade, importations, and so on, I heard from our fishermen. And I really need to share this with you because I don't know if it's the right platform. But I really need to take advantage of this forum.

On the implications related to imports and trades with the queen conch is the stronger and more efficient tool to address the queen conch across the range which is what this process of ESA are looking for which mainly are Caribbean-wide. If we lead by example like we always do, very responsibly of the U.S. It's a bad precedent if we affect the small Caribbean fishers that fish under the best science-based regulations about limits, closed seasons, mainly closed in federal waters with some exceptions.

Do you think there is other countries that will be compelled to follow science in the future if this is the case, if you lead with that example and put that example on the table through the ESA process if the fishermen get affected at this time in the U.S. Caribbean? And not just criticizing but giving solutions, I think we can make it better to U.S. Caribbean addressing the ESA and the relation with international trade and imports if you are very proactive on that matter. And the only thing that we need to fix locally is the way I see it and the fishermen see it is doing like a task force for enforcement which we need improvement, long-term population monitoring.

We need money for that, outreach and education for fisher buyer restaurants locally, dealers and restaurants. And I don't know if it's appropriate these comments. But I need to put that out there. Thank you very much for all of your collaborations and to have the ears open to the U.S. Caribbean.

Ms. Cole: Thanks very much for those comments. I always think it's good to lead by example. I can't speak to that issue very specifically. But it is -- in terms of how we engage internationally, it is almost always by leading through example.

And despite the fact that there is often frustration about the fact that it doesn't always then feel like a completely even playing field between the U.S. and other countries,

our goal is always to bring other countries up to our level. And so the only way you can do that is by leading by example. So I think you're on the right track.

Mr. Hanke: I'm just afraid that we're going to give a wrong example if we're doing the things right, what other countries are going to feel compelled or eager to follow our example if the fishermen from the jurisdiction are being affected, right? I think that can be very bad for the conch across the range that leading that strategy of example.

Mr. Townsend: Kitty.

Ms. Simonds: Nice to see you, Alexa. So a couple points. Regarding BBNJ, we're really happy that the U.S. is maintaining its position that the RFMOs are the leading implementation mechanism for ABMTs.

That is really important to us because you know that 61 percent of our zone in the Western Pacific region is closed to U.S. fishing. And any other closure, of course, it would be devastating to the American Samoa economy which is the StarKist cannery and the U.S. purse seiners that fish for that cannery. Are they able to fish as close as possible?

We call it the J&J policy where the U.S. should open Jarvis and for American Samoa because it's closest to them. Otherwise, our purse seiners that offload in American Samoa, if any more of the U.S. zones are closed, the PRIAs, they'll go to Ecuador to offload. So it's really important for the U.S. to support its fisheries.

So I was happy to hear you say that with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework that you folks are making sure that people are concerned about fisheries. And then in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, you said that one of the points in there is safeguarding fisheries. So you know last year the Council developed a -- we called it a new Pacific strategy in order for us to find a way to increase our bigeye quota in the Western and Central Pacific Commission.

So it seems as though these two other elements work very well with the Council's position and paper. And so obviously you need to continue to meld all of this

together. All of the departments that have kuleana in the Pacific need to work together.

And it may seem like a small ask of increasing our bigeye quota which is the smallest of all the nations. But it's big for us, and it's big for the U.S. The U.S. only has two major tuna fisheries in the Pacific Ocean. That's it.

And the purse seine fishery, the number of boat vessels has gone from 30 to 12. So what are we out there? What is the U.S. out there in terms of fisheries which are very, very important to China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan?

So that leads me into this announcement by the administration, the Vice President. And then Monica announced that 600 million dollars were going to be given those countries, those 16 island countries that have a treaty with the U.S. for access for our U.S. purse seiners. So my question is has that request been made to the Congress?

Ms. Cole: Thanks, Kitty. So it is for fiscal year '24, right, because that -- so I think that is not yet gone to the Congress the commitment. And the commitment was not to give them 600 million. The commitment was to ask for Congress to give us the 600 million --

Ms. Simonds: I get that. I get that.

Ms. Cole: -- which is 60 million a year for ten years.

Ms. Simonds: And they are very suspicious about it --

Ms. Cole: Yeah.

Ms. Simonds: -- as well.

Ms. Cole: I just like to make that clarity since it's not up to us. It's up to Congress.

Ms. Simonds: Right, exactly.

Ms. Cole: But yes, so that request, I don't know where it is in the budget cycle. It will come from State Department, not NOAA.

Ms. Simonds: Right.

Ms. Cole: But it is for fiscal year '24.

Ms. Simonds: Right. But wasn't there something about that sum of money for '23?

Ms. Cole: Yes.

Ms. Simonds: Right. So what happened to that?

Ms. Cole: So that money was already committed by the U.S. Department of State. And I believe that's money --

Ms. Simonds: That's the 60 --

Ms. Cole: -- that they have in -- that's not the 60 million. It's 10 million.

Ms. Simonds: Right.

Ms. Cole: Yeah.

Ms. Simonds: All right. Okay, good. Thanks. So anyway, so leading up to the Western and Central Pacific Commission, for ten years or so now, the U.S. has been unsuccessful in getting the Commission to agree to increase the bigeye quota for our longliners in Hawaii. Remember one of the two only U.S. fisheries in the Pacific Ocean and for many reasons. So this is why we developed that Pacific strategy that I mentioned earlier to get all of the departments who have -- well, we use the word kuleana stake in the Pacific to work together to help us.

And so what we've decided to do is we're holding a workshop, the Council with the head of fisheries for the Marshall Islands, to begin the discussion of how do we get this done. How do we get our quota increase? So what is it that you Island people want that we all can work with?

And we know what that is. But we need to start early because in the past everything is always at the last minute. And then they have excuses, like, oh, we don't have enough time to review the U.S. proposal. The U.S. had a wonderful proposal last year because we don't want to seem selfish, right?

So it was proposal where everybody got an increase except for Japan whose quota is 17,000 metric tons and ours is 3,100 metric tons. So I did want to mention this

that it's one of the most important things for our Council, our region. And that we have a number of countries who are coming, all the important countries from the Pacific Islands.

And so we hope we can move this along. And Alexa, you'll be there to help us move it along as well. So I think that's what I have for now. Thank you.

Ms. Cole: Thanks, Kitty. I will be there to help move it along. I look forward to seeing you there for that workshop and I'm glad that it's moving ahead.

And I just wanted to say just to point to the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Pacific strategy that you've been talking about. I know that this has been a big topic of conversation between Kelly Kryc, our Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries, her counterpart at the U.S. Department of State, Maxine Burkett, who's the DAS at the Department of State overseeing fisheries and marine issues as well as their counterpart at the U.S. Department of Interior. And that they have been talking about a Pacific strategy, talking about engagement in the Pacific.

And I think they are still planning to try and do a trip early in 2023 to engage with the Pacific Island countries on these issues and more. So it is not something that isn't front of mind. It is very much front of mind I think for all three of them. And they're really looking forward to being able to continue to push forward on this issue, both at the workshop coming up and as we move forward into the future. So thanks for that.

Ms. Simonds: I forgot about one more thing, the Commissioner positions for the South Pacific Commission, the Council position there, and the Western and Central Pacific Commission Council Commissioner. So where are those?

Ms. Cole: Those are all on their way to the White House. They have, I think -- I think the South Pacific one is already over at State Department. It's gone up through the Department, and I think the others are between me and the Secretary of Commerce.

That's kind of a big area between me and the Secretary

of Commerce, but they're somewhere in there. They'll go to the State Department and then over to the White House. The White House is aware that they're coming.

They've committed to trying to move these things much more quickly once they get them. So we've got a number of appointments for a number of commissions that are all in that train. Yeah, but they're all moving along.

Mr. Townsend: Thank you. Any questions? Any comments? Anymore questions for Alexa? John?

Mr. Gourley: Thank you, Alexa. I was just kind of curious. The Indo-Pacific Strategy, is that -- are we going to be getting regular annual updates? What's the next step for that? How are we going to find out what's actually going on with the meet because the document is kind of broad?

Ms. Cole: So it is a very broad. And to be frank about it, we don't have that much information. I certainly am happy to continue to provide any updates that we have on it.

We are more -- we as a whole department and NOAA are more closely engaged in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. The Secretary is deeply engaged there. The Indo-Pacific Strategy as I mentioned earlier, it is more aspirational.

The details of it aren't quite as formulated. When we say at this stage, my understanding is that the action plan has been developed. I'm not even sure if it is final or not.

It might be final, but we haven't gotten a lot more information. So I don't have a ton of information on it. As we get information, we're happy to provide updates as it moves forward. But I don't know exactly the timeline for that effort.

Mr. Gourley: Do you have funding to carry this on for the next three, four, five years? Or is this an unfunded mandate for NMFS, or --

Ms. Cole: So it isn't a mandate for NMFS. I would put it that way. So we certainly don't have funding for it. It

isn't something that my office is actively engaged in.

It is happening at a higher governmental level than that. We are on occasion trying to provide some subject matter expertise into the process. But it isn't something that NOAA or NOAA Fisheries is implementing.

Mr. Gourley: Okay. Thank you. I think we would be interested in regular updates for both the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the IPEF. Is that what you call it, IPEF? We would definitely be interested in updates on that to see where they're going and kind of track their progress. Thank you.

Mr. Townsend: Seeing no more -- oh, we do have one more hand. Bill?

Mr. Tweit: Thanks, Alexa. I'm wondering what you can tell us about the upcoming climate and international fisheries focus groups discussion that's scheduled for next week.

Ms. Cole: So I think -- if I'm remembering which ones you're talking about, I think those are the ones that our Deputy Assistant Secretary Kelly Kryc had scheduled. She's had a series of those. They are intended to be primarily listening sessions where she is trying to gather feedback from all sorts of interested stakeholders on issues related to climate change and international fisheries.

I think she will then be working with her staff. Her Sea Grant Fellow I think has the lead on taking the information and compiling it for her to consider in 2023 what are some of the actions that she can consider taking to the regional fishery management organizations to try and push forward the issue of climate change a little bit more aggressively than has been happening at some of the RFMOs thus far. They're really intended to be listening sessions, trying to gather information. She's looking to sort of pick the brains of all the smart people who are stakeholders in all of our issues to help develop some recommendations going forward with the RFMOs for future seasons.

Mr. Tweit: Thanks. So it's really focused on the RFMOs and not necessarily on the broader range of

international agreements, or --

Ms. Cole: So I think if you have feedback that is related to other international agreements that would be welcome as well. Her focus has primarily been on RFMOs because that's what her responsibility is. But I think if you've got issues that are related to other international organizations, she would welcome that as well because she is looking at climate issues more broadly. But her general focus is international fisheries agreements.

Mr. Tweit: Thank you. That's helpful. It's been a little difficult to sort of figure out what's going to be useful to bring forward. So that is helpful.

Ms. Cole: Yeah.

Mr. Townsend: Seeing no more hands, Alexa, thank you very much for your presentation. And let's move on to our final agenda item before lunch, Equity, Environmental Justice. We're going to have a presentation from the CCC EEJ Work Group, Dr. Jose Montanez. Whenever you're ready.

Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ)

Mr. Montanez: Thank you. Hello, everyone. And more specifically, we're going to be talking about the work group recommendations that came to address the May 2022 CCC meeting that you pass regarding EEJ.

So here's a brief outline of my presentation. I'm just going to spend a little bit of time talking about the tasking and the composition of the work group and then go over meeting overview on process. And then the bulk of the presentation is going to be regarding the overview of the report.

So at the main CCC meeting, you review two documents. One was the draft strategy for international marine fishery service and the other one was a document that was produced by another work group called Equity and Environmental Justice in fisheries management brief overview. So after the CCC review of those two documents, they pass a motion that was intended to guide the EEJ work group on the next steps on this work.

So this is the motion that was passed in May to establish an EEJ work group to share information about differing approaches to meet EEJ objective, taking into account the draft EEJ strategy. The work group should consider developing terms of reference, holding an EEJ workshop, and publishing a peer review journal article on their work. So you can see here that this motion has multiple components.

So the CCC repopulated the work group. This is the work group that was formed to address this task. All of the members were staff from the different councils. And the Mid-Atlantic and the Western Pacific were co-chair the work group.

So here's just a brief overview of the process. The work group was completely repopulated by the second week of July. We had our first meeting on July 28, and then we have three subsequent meetings after that.

The group decided to kind of have a meeting about once a month because there were just too many conflicting scheduling issues. But there was quite a bit of work that was done offline. So the report that we produced outlines the actions to address the multiple components of the May 22 motion.

Section 1 covers the terms of reference for a formal CCC EEJ work group. Section 2 provides alternative strategies for a potential workshop. Third section contains example of potential steps, each regional fishery management council and the CCC could take to explore and address EEJ issues further.

Section 4 discusses the development of a peer review journal article. And then the last section presents major points for consideration from the multiple letters that were submitted by the councils to -- comment letters to the draft strategy. So now we're going to move into a review of the overview of the report.

And I will cover each one of those five points that I just -- sections that I just described. Now one thing to keep in mind is that the work group had key questions that were posted in the document and also requested other feedback through the document that the CCC might want to consider as we move along. And I will bring

them up during the presentation so you can keep track of those.

So the first section of the document presents the terms of reference to formalize the CCC EEJ work group. They are presented in Appendix 1 of the document. In all, there are seven terms of reference.

They are straightforward and easy to understand. And they talk about things from membership to the group to the numbers of meetings that we can have per year, how the documentation is going to be kept, and the function of the group. So in all, they outline the group's function and work plan to better understand EEJ concerns in fisheries management.

The terms of reference, the aim to developing this were to develop an ongoing and collaborative process to share information about potential approaches to EEJ across regions and support the CCC on related work on this issue and also to provide an opportunity to set a collective tone on EEJ. So here's the first key question. Does the CCC agree with the terms of reference for the information of a formal EEJ work group?

Section 2 shows potential steps each regional fishery management council and the CCC could take to explore and address EEJ. The potential steps, they're all listed in Appendix B. And these were drawn from the document that we shared with you last May.

And this section also shows how this next step aligns with NOAA's environmental justice strategy. So in all, there are 21 steps that were identified across six areas. And these areas are listed here.

And the important thing is how these six areas, they're aligned with the core objectives that were identified in NOAA's draft strategy. So the six areas are outreach and engagement, best scientific information, policy and planning, benefits, inclusive government, and empowering environment. So here I'm showing you a digital image of a portion of Appendix B.

This is how the information was presented. So on the first column there, you see numbers 1, 2 and that goes all the way down to 21. Column 2 is a description of the

step.

On the third column, we show how each one of those steps related to the core objective and actions that are described in the draft strategy. And the last column describes some considerations are important to keep in mind when undertaking those steps or things that can come out of that. Now one of the things that you can notice here is, like, for example -- and this is the only thing that I'm going to show from this appendix.

But step number 1, if you were to follow that or implement that, it will go across two core objectives. You can see there that you have Table 7 that does outreach and engagement and then -- Table 5, excuse me, then Table 7 that is inclusive governance. So some of the steps, they go across multiple core objectives that are presented in the strategy for the service.

The work group wanted to flag that many of the actions in Appendix B will require a significant commitment from the agency and Council staff time, financial resources, and more. We also pointed out that regional needs and resources to address EEJ issues are diverse across the Council family. Now I'm just going to jump a little bit to Section 3, and this is something that you can see in the document.

And Section 3 is the one that talks about the EEJ workshop. And one of the things that we say in that section is that some of these steps that are presented here in Section might provide the starting point for an EEJ workshop. The work group also suggested seeking stakeholder input and collaboration for how to advance EEJ in the Council process, including improvements to better connect barriers with remedies.

Now we're going to move into Section 3. And this is the section that provides alternative strategies for the potential use of a workshop to discuss EEJ concerns and questions, brainstorm ideas, identify problems, and develop potential solutions for the CCC to consider. It is anticipated that at least some members of the CCC will participate in this workshop.

Outcomes and comments from the workshop will be provided to the CCC to solicit feedback and additional

public engagement. And here's one of the feedbacks that the work group is asking the CCC for input on. And it will be something that will need or it will be needed to develop a more detailed proposal for the workshop that includes goals, timelines, budget, location, et cetera.

Consideration of the following points will be useful in guiding the developing of a workshop. The EEJ work group is asking for advice on the following points. What are the CCC objectives for the EEJ workshop?

This is something that we couldn't really get from the motion. But the work group brainstormed some potential object that the CCC may consider. The first one is developing of applications.

And basically, the workshop could be used as a collaborative space to develop concrete ideas on how to implement, say, one, two, or three of those next steps that I showed you in the prior section that are presented in Appendix B. Now if you remember I told you that we have 21 next steps. So something else that the work group is asking is for the CCC to prioritize the potential next steps to be addressed at the workshop.

We need to narrow that down because there's just too much there. And we think that leadership might be better in selecting what needs to be tackled at a potential workshop. Another potential objective will be a cross cutting objective of an EEJ workshop that could help relationship and partnership building across the regions.

And the last one is use it as a means to have dialogue, for example, to have coordinated conversations across the regions on the plans for advancing EEJ. This dialogue will likely include Council members, Council staff as well as regional office and science center leads. The work group also indicated that we need more guidance on whose participation is critical to meeting the CCC objectives.

So the feedback on workshop objective will definitely inform who is going to be participating in the workshop. So I could be Council members. It could be Council staff, fishery science center staff with related social science or EEJ expertise, independent researchers with related

fisheries, and EEJ expertise. So this is a very crucial component of planning a workshop in the future.

Here I'm showing you two conceptual models for an EEJ workshop. These models are intended to just inform the CCC's action and dialogue. The two models are not overly prescriptive or presuppose a particular course of action for the CCC.

So on the left, you have Conceptual Model 1. Under this model, a workshop will be conducted with Council members and staff from each region to share information on issues, ideas, and solutions related to EEJ. Again, at a workshop like this, we will have to identify from, say, one to three next steps that can be tackled during the workshop.

So this model approach -- I'm repeating it again -- will require the CCC to prioritize the next steps to be the focal point of the workshop. Then on the right you have the second model which will be to conduct a multi-regional and national level workshop with staff from all councils and NOAA fisheries to discuss the role of the councils and partners for implementing NOAA's EEJ strategy. Now this model will require that the councils and NOAA fisheries staff have the same level of engagement in workshop planning and attendance.

Here's a second key question posted by the workgroup. What are the CCC objectives for an EEJ workshop? Section 4 addresses the issue of considering publishing a peer review journal article on the work that has been done so far.

The work group indicated that this is probably something that is premature at this point. The document that we showed you back in May, equity and environmental justice in fisheries management brief overview, that document is posted at the CCC website. And it's available for the public to take a look at it.

And we think that publishing that now will not significantly contribute to the EEJ literature. However, it might be more appropriate to develop a peer review journal article through the completion of a workshop or at some time in the future when there is more progress on advancing EEJ and lessons to be shared. So another

key question here is -- for the CCC is, does the CCC support the EEJ work group's finding to hold off on writing a peer review article at this time.

And we just think that there's just not enough there to really do something that is going to contribute to the literature. Section 5 presents major points for consideration from Council comment letters that were submitted to NOAA fisheries regarding the EEJ draft strategy. Now this was not part of the CCC motion.

But the work group thought that it was important to incorporate this into the document as it might help developing potential avenues for collaboration. So there are seven letters that you can find in Appendix C. And some of the common theme areas are concerns regarding funding and staffing with respect to efforts that are required to meet the EEJ strategy from the service.

There is a desire to collaborate with NOAA fisheries staff in the development of regional implementation plans. And there is also a need to identify underserved communities. So these were some of the common themes across the comment letters that were provided.

Now following the public comment period, NOAA fisheries indicated that they will be developing regional implementation plans regarding EEJ. And the work group hopes that the councils will be included in the development of these regional plans. And that's all that I have as far as my presentation.

Mr. Townsend: Thank you, Jose. Before we go to questions and comments to Jose, let's get an update on the National Marine Fishery EEJ strategy. Sam, when you're ready.

Mr. Rauch: Sure. And I don't have a PowerPoint so I was just going to go ahead and provide a brief update here.

And I wanted at the outset to express my appreciation to the work of the council EEJ Working Group for the great amount of effort that they put forth prior to this sort of, I think, repopulation of the working group and since May on this issue was very helpful. And it speaks volumes about the importance that the council system is

putting on this exact issue, and we share that.

At Fisheries, we are also committed to advancing equity and environmental justice including equal treatment, opportunities and environmental benefits for all people and communities.

And as we have talked, as you've seen through the strategy, that both has a forward looking component, how can do things better in the future, and a backward looking component to look at what we've done in the past and what the effects of that might have been so that we can know and plan for those things better.

There are a lot of different parameters. Jose listed some of the main goals, particularly for the council system looking at a more inclusive management system with meaningful engagement of underrepresented stakeholders in the next generation of fishermen.

We talked about some of that this morning, about the challenges, you know, mechanistically of how you get to that. But I think in general, the councils have been very supportive of trying to look at ways to expand participation in their meetings. That's easier said than done.

Sometimes to figure out how to do it is difficult. But I think that is something that we are also interested in doing, making sure that the council system can be more inclusive of different viewpoints.

This has been a Presidential directive from day one. I've talked to the councils many times about this. I know the councils have taken it seriously.

We are working across the board not just through the EEJ -- the drafting of the EEJ strategy, but in many different topics, both within fisheries and across NOAA and the department and with many partners to look at these kind of questions and try to figure out how we can advance these concepts across the board.

I know the focus here is on fisheries and fisheries management. Our mandate is bigger. We do look at other things, protecting resources, habitat, other kinds of issues that we reach out on. I want to explain some of that. Fisheries are obviously a key critical component,

and you guys are critical partners in that.

So we did issue the draft strategy. And the comment period was extended but did close at the end of September. We've taken a number of comments, a huge amount of comments from the public. We got comments from seven of the eight councils.

We did hear from you about the importance of urgent need on identifying underserved communities. This was recognized in our strategy that the first step is often figuring out who the underserved communities are and we should not assume we know. And it is a difficult question. It is about identifying those underserved communities.

Linked to this is, as I said, the need for a more inclusive management process, which include council processes. For example, the North Pacific stated that improving the accessibility of public meetings, documents in the decision-making process can increase the diversity of public comments and support NOAA Fisheries and the Regional Fishery Management Councils in identifying potentially underserved communities. We saw this as a theme through many of our comments.

There was a need for equity environmental justice research, but often with the acknowledgment that that would require additional support for social science. I'm going to speak on that in just a little bit.

Many councils highlighted expectations for working with NIPS to develop regional implementation, which is what the working group just reported. And finally the councils have listed capacity needs to ensure effective implementation, including funding, staff time and training.

And let me just say at the outset, the issue of funding pervades the entire discussion. We knew when we issued our draft strategy that we did not have the existing funds to do everything that we had proposed.

We know that the councils, if they wanted to fully engage in everything that you might ultimately adopt, probably don't have the funds to do that.

The President did ask Congress for funds in 2023. And I

would expect that those kinds of requests would continue. It remains to be seen what is going to happen with 2023. But there is an understanding on the President's behalf that we need to make investments if we are really going to achieve that.

With that said, there is a lot of things in the strategy that we can do without additional funds. And the councils, I think, reflect that as well. There are a lot of things that can be done with existing resources.

And so working through that is going to be an issue. But we do recommend, we do understand, that everything that is outlined there will take more funds than we currently have. The President has asked for more funds, and we'll have to see whether the Congress grants that or not.

We are working across the board within this concept and out. I mentioned some of the science enterprise that we're working on. We've talked before about the Social Indicators Working Group at Fisheries Service, which is a group of social scientists that look at things like income levels of fishing communities.

They had not originally been looking at what was an underserved community. But they were looking at what fishing communities are and what sort of social and economic dynamics are available on fishing communities. And this is something that we and you all use in your decision-making to try to figure out how the effects are going to be.

We are working to improve that with an idea that to take some of these concepts of equity and environmental justice, our social science team is now working with your college to develop a new community environmental justice explore tool, which is going to build on the existing tool with more of an equity and environmental justice overlay.

And a number of our Regional Science Centers and others are working with their counterparts throughout the regions on different projects to pursue to help make sure that we, as decision-makers, have better data on equity and on who might be the underserved communities.

The next steps, as I mentioned, we had put the document out for public comment. It ended on the draft after two extensions on September 30. Our working groups, we have a working group, too, that is actually drafting the final national strategy.

They are looking at all the extensive feedback, including the feedback that we got from the councils. And we hope to finalize this early in 2023.

We had hoped to do it in 2022, but because of the extensiveness of the comments and the volume of comments, which are all very good and supportive, but they were extensive, it's likely going to be early 2023.

As I've mentioned before, this is a national strategy. So it sets the tone. It sets some high level principles. It sets a formula for looking at some of these things. But a lot of the equity and environmental justice issues are dealt at a more regional or local level. We know that.

So after the national strategy is done, there will be a need to work on regional implementation plans. That is going to be done by our regions after the national strategy comes out, sometime at the end of, you know, the rest of '23, maybe into 2024 depending on that schedule.

They are intended to cover the suite of our activities and not just our fishing-related activities. But they are also going to cover our fishing-related activities. And in that context, the councils are important partners in working through that.

And in our meeting with all of the regional administrators tomorrow afternoon, we're going to talk about how we're going to do this, what our plans are. But we do intend to include the councils in that process because much of the council is excited about this. And it feels like good support. We do also feel like it is important to work with the councils through this system.

We are reaching out to others as well. We are currently either as we speak or this week talking to the new council member training. That training is going on right now, the same time as this meeting. We are giving them an update on the EEJ strategy. And we're going to be

talking with the state directors next month in San Diego when we meet with them.

We are also sponsoring a National Academies of Science engineering and math study to review the data and the methods that we've used or could use to evaluate the distribution of benefits.

And one of those categories is benefits. And one of the things that we do is allocation of benefits and those kinds of things, looking at quotas, privileges and that and to look at whether or not in the past we've had issues with equity environmental justice or how we can ensure we don't have issues in the future.

That study committee will hold several public meetings, and we hope to have a report in about 18 months. So it's going to take a while to get through all of that.

Happy to take more questions, Mr. Chairman, Vice Chairman, but that's my update for right now.

Mr. Townsend: Thank you, sir. Any questions for Sam or Jose? Tom Nies?

Mr. Nies: Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair. Thanks, Jose, and thanks, Sam, for your comments. I've got a specific question on the terms of reference for the workgroup, which I think is something they are seeking our approval on today.

And I'm not sure if this is directed to Jose or the group as a whole, but the CCC has workgroups and subcommittees. Some of them are permanent, some of them are not. Are we envisioning that this is a permanent workgroup? That's one question.

And the second question is specifically to number five in the terms of reference. It says the workgroup meets at least once a year.

Are we committing to an in-person meeting of that workgroup once a year or are we talking about a virtual meeting? I believe many of our workgroups do not commit to an in-person meeting once a year. So I just want to make sure I understand what that means.

Mr. Townsend: Jose?

Mr. Montanez: We do not specifically talk about meeting in person or virtually. But I don't see an issue with meeting virtually, you know, and if there is a need to have an in-person meeting then that will drive the agenda, I will say.

Mr. Nies: Thank you.

Mr. Townsend: Kitty?

Ms. Simonds: Hey, so, Sam, are you folks also reviewing, in the context of EEJ, unjustified regulations?

Mr. Rauch: I don't know what you mean by unjustified regulations. We periodically review all regulations, and the councils often give us advice, you know, if they are Magnuson Act regulations, whether or not they were done. I do not know what the definition of unjustified regulations you are using.

Ms. Simonds: It was close to, you know, injustice and all of those kinds of words. So, I mean, we try to do this, especially in our part of the world where most people are brown and yellow and live in, you know, poverty pockets.

So we do, you know, look at what's practical, what's feasible. But things don't always happen that way because, you know, the Feds decide that something should be done a certain way, it doesn't matter if it's feasible or unfeasible or practical.

So I guess what I'm saying is that we and you all should be when we're developing management plans or whatever we're developing that we need to look very closely at that because we do. And we don't always win. But I think it's really important that you look at the regulatory regimes in that respect so. Thanks.

Mr. Rauch: Yeah, I mean, if I could just -- it's not clear to me exactly what you are asking. But we do believe that at least through the fishery context, the councils and the Fishery Service should be looking at the effect of our regulations on communities and now on underserved communities.

We believe that that comes under National Standard 8. And as Director Coit said yesterday, this is one thing

that we are looking at potentially updating. That is going to be a lengthy process.

We are trying to give more information through the council's systems so that we can better understand that. We are still compelled to comply with the legal mandates.

But, within that, to the extent that we have discretion, we should be looking at ways to avoid these unanticipated effects on underserved communities and that is exactly what we are trying to do a better job of.

Ms. Simonds: Well, then I guess I should say that what I'm specifically talking about are our swordfish regulations. And where our SSC and the council were opposed to the additional burdens on the fishery that were unnecessary. That's really what I'm referring to and that I'm telling you folks that you need to take in all of this into consideration.

Mr. Townsend: Marcos?

Mr. Hanke: Yeah, there are so many things to talk about with the EEJ in the Caribbean. But I want to follow-up on Kitty's comment about regulatory regimes and process.

It just struck me out on the previous comment that I did to Alexa that I was thankful for her answer. How we follow EEJ objectives during complex process that for sure effect the resiliency and the likelihood of underserved communities, for example, under the ESA process for the queen conch. This is what really concerned me, how complex and how much of the voice of those communities are heard during those processes.

And don't forget, we have some crisis and traumas in Puerto Rico, different realities and different culture aspects that also are attached to those EEJ considerations. That's basically a comment.

Mr. Rauch: That gets to the part of the rest of our mandate that is not necessarily just fishing. You mentioned the Endangered Species Act as one of our protected resources mandates.

And one of the things that we're trying to do, you know, we have legal mandates that we have to meet. But

where we have discretion within those legal mandates to consider the needs of underserved communities, we're trying to do a better job of identifying them.

And where we have the ability to choose amongst options, we choose the option that does not impact underserved communities. I think historically we have not had either good data or good decision-making processes that would allow us to do that.

Part of this effort is to clarify what we can do, where those boundaries are and be able to act more deliberately. So that is part of the process that we are also looking at. Our entire portfolio, not just the fishing portfolio, is what we are considering.

Mr. Hanke: The reason I make the comment is because I know by experience how our voices are being heard and the process had been evolving over time. And that's why I took the time to make this comment. And I really appreciate your comments.

Mr. Townsend: Chris?

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Jose posed -- thanks, Jose, for the presentation. You posed a number of questions to the CCC in your presentation on those five points. And I'm not sure which ones we need to address today.

And Tom also asked a couple of other questions related to those that we need to address at some point. So, in terms of what the working group thought about today, what are the things that you need from us today and what were the thoughts for next steps?

Mr. Montanez: We did not identify specific things that needed to be done today. I think they all need to be addressed at one point as we move forward depending on what you want to do.

So if you wanted to say, okay, I want the workgroup to start working on developing a workshop, for example, you're probably looking at, I will say, a one year time period to develop the plans to implement to have a workshop.

So the idea of the terms of reference, I think that if I

were to choose, I think that the terms of reference are important because that will solidify the formation of that workgroup that is going to be helping the CCC work through these EEJ issues that we might potentially have down the road.

Now, Tom Nies, and he asked a two part question, and I really didn't answer his question properly. I just talked about, are we going to have, are we going to meet in-person or virtually? And that is the only thing that I addressed.

But the other part of your question, is this going to be a permanent group? And now I see why you're saying that because term of reference five says that you're going to be meeting once a year.

So there is flexibility to change that there. And we're just going to be meeting when the CCC thinks that we need to meet to address any issues that are important to you.

But I think that -- I will say that the formation of the workgroup will be priority number one. And then I think that the answers to all the other questions that were posed by the workgroup are needed to be addressed in the event that the CCC wants to have a workshop.

And I think that is going to be a little bit longer term. And I think that's going to need some type of meeting from the EDs to really iron out all of those different issues regarding budget, objective and things that require quite a bit of thinking.

Mr. Townsend: Tom?

Mr. Nies: Thanks. Thanks, Jose. You know, given the items that they have addressed -- or I shouldn't say addressed. Given the items that the workgroup has highlighted, I think it makes a lot of sense if we at least look at this as a permanent workgroup.

As Jose points out, planning a workshop is going to take some time. And I don't know that this is going to be a one and done thing. So, you know, I think that we should all -- from our point of view here, I think, in New England this should be a permanent workgroup.

The other thing I think with Jose's clarification about they are really not committing to what type of meeting they have, you know, I would think the one thing we may want to do is consider approving the terms of reference that are in Appendix A of their report today. But I would be interested in what other councils think of that.

Mr. Townsend: Bill? Are you good with that? Chris?

Dr. Moore: So I'm good with that. And certainly I think, it's a good idea to have a permanent workgroup dealing with this particular topic.

So just to be clear, what the CCC would endorse today is the formation of or the continuation of this workgroup as a permanent CCC working group.

And also the terms of reference that Jose put up today, and that also went around, would be endorsed and supported by the CCC. So does everyone agree with that so we have no objections to that?

Mr. Farchette: So what Tom said, the meetings would be at the discretion of the CCC, not every year. So with that caveat, we agree with it.

Dr. Moore: So we would have those three parts then, including what Miguel said. So does everyone -- everyone is okay with that just so we understand so we don't -- I'm trying to avoid putting a formal motion up on the board unless we need to.

So if everyone agrees, has no objections to those things that we just discussed, then I think we're good to go, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Townsend: All right, you're saying the three things that everybody is in agreement with, we're all fine with that? No objections? Well, pretty much that concludes this -- do we have a couple more things here?

Dr. Moore: Well, just to add to the other things that Jose listed for consideration. So I think we're going to have -- we've agreed that we have a working group. We've agreed to the terms of reference. We've agreed to the timing. But there are other aspects of what we asked us to consider that we haven't really talked about.

And I don't think we're prepared to talk about what we would want at a workshop or who would be at a workshop or any of that today. And I get the sense, Jose, that what you might be proposing, what the working group might be proposing is that we collectively meet at some time in the future, the near future, as a group, CCC and the executive directors, to talk about some of these other things that you proposed.

So that, I think, should be the expectation for the group unless I'm missing something.

Mr. Townsend: Okay. All right. Thank you, Chris. Tom? Go ahead.

Mr. Nies: So the last thing I think he was asking is our concurrence that they not a publish a peer reviewed journal article at this time. And I'm fine with that.

Mr. Townsend: Chris?

Dr. Moore: Yeah, I would agree with that. Anyone object to that, not publishing a peer reviewed journal article?

Mr. Townsend: No. Everybody seems okay with that. Without publishing one, right? I could write this one, I mean. All right. So we'll come back -- we'll probably visit this a year from now or six months from now?

Dr. Moore: So watch for an email from Jose or from me indicating when we might have a meeting to talk about the other points that Jose brought up today.

Mr. Townsend: All right. Thank you, Chris. Jose, do you have anything else you would like to bring up?

Mr. Montanez: No. Thank you.

Mr. Townsend: All right. Sam, are you good with everything?

Mr. Rauch: I'm good. Thank you.

Mr. Townsend: With that, I think we're going to all go to lunch. And we'll see everybody back here promptly at 2 o'clock so we can get the afternoon agenda finished. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the

record at 12:16 p.m. and resumed at 2:02 p.m.)

Chair Luisi: Okay. Welcome back, everybody. I have a little after 2 o'clock so I'd like to get things started for our afternoon session.

But before I do I will just make the note that I grew up in Philadelphia. And the Phillies are playing this afternoon at 4:30 and I'm hoping they are going to be on TV. So anything we can do to wrap this up by 4:30 would be very -- I would really enjoy sitting down and watching a little bit of the Phillies game this afternoon.

So, with that said, I'm going to turn things over for the America the Beautiful initiative. Eric Reid is going to provide us some updates and a short presentation. And then we have Sam, who is also going to provide us some updates as well. So I want to kick things off with Eric.

America the Beautiful Initiative

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and maybe you'll have a black and white TV with the tubes to go with the sound system to watch the game on today, anyway.

Thank you very much. In the interest of accuracy, I appreciate you allowing time for this brief update and not the final product just yet so.

Next slide, please. Just a reminder of who is doing all the work, the team. And thanks to everyone for a continuing great effort. And actually seven of the team are in this room right now so there they are.

Next slide, please, recalling the terms of reference for our task. Number one, assist the CCC in reacting to 30X30, prepare an annual -- prepare a report, sorry, on area-based management measures in the U.S. EEZ, and you've already seen the thousand plus pages of the draft.

And three to prepare a journal article on area-based measures for marine fisheries in the U.S. for dissemination to a broad audience, including our elected officials and their staff.

Next slide, please. We've had several meetings since May, including one with CEQ.

Next slide, please. The meeting with CEQ was attended by Chairman Luisi, Mr. Witherell and myself. The other agencies were NOAA, USDA, USGS and the Department of the Interior. And the draft report was received very well, including a productive Q&A session.

There was a lot of interest from the group to use the report and the data to inform the conservation atlas. And this will certainly help others better understand fisheries, regulations and impacts on conservation, especially when we include our journal article.

Next slide, please. We continue to review and refine our documents in preparation for the GIS work completion. We've made some tweaks to handling of ESA and MMPA protected resources. We split the mobile bottom tending gear into trawl and dredge.

We've tightened up our conservation area groupings, and we've also ensured that monuments, sanctuaries and the like are included because they have fishing restrictions in the EEZ. And we are continually doing final checks for consistency across all council regions.

Next slide, please, GIS, the tool to accurately determine the number. What's the big question? What's the number?

In early September the New England Council executed a contract with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission for GIS work. And that work is well underway by the contractor.

We've already met our first milestone in mid-September to assemble the data. Our second milestone is due shortly to create the spatial data, fill some gaps and to begin assembling a geodatabase, which is expected shortly.

The next milestone is coming up towards the end of October. That's when we'll calculate the conservation area by council and region and category and then create maps.

And the contract is scheduled to end on April 1 of 2023 but most likely the delivery date will be in December or early January and then we can adjust the tables for the final presentation shortly after that.

So my question to this body, my first question is, how do you want to receive this final document when it is time? I don't really want to wait until May. I prefer not to wait until May. So I just need some guidance. We all need some guidance on how you want to make that happen. And in my opinion, I think sooner is better than later.

We also have a question about where is this document going to live? Where is it going to be housed? Where is the document going to be housed? And whether or not there is any discussion or plan to look into the future and say we want to review the living document after X amount of time.

Next slide, please. The next steps for us are to finalize the regional maps and conservation area calculations working with the contractor, finalize the report in the appendices, continue to work with NOAA Fisheries on the Atlas database, of course, support the CCC on development of any position statement, prepare the journal article on the use of area-based management and U.S. Fisheries management and conservation.

And we talked about a press release at our last meeting. So I don't know whether or not you want to address this today, whether there should be an initial press release and the big one, when do we finally roll this product out in a few months? That's certainly up to the CCC.

And with that, I asked the questions first. But I'm happy to take any additional questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chair Luisi: Yeah, thank you, Eric. I think you need to take your presentation skills on the road. I know I could certainly use a little help where I'm coming from. No, you did a great job. So thanks for that.

Mr. Reid: Thank you. I had plenty of help. Don't worry.

Chair Luisi: So let's try to -- let's look around the table to see if anybody has any feedback for Eric on the questions that he asked. One is where is -- how do you want to receive the document, where is it going to be housed and what was the third one?

Mr. Reid: Press release.

Chair Luisi: Press release.

Mr. Reid: And whether or not you want to talk about a review for a living document --

Chair Luisi: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Reid: -- sometime in the future.

Chair Luisi: Okay.

Mr. Reid: But the first one is the big one, you know, when do you want to roll this out? I mean, our product is for the CCC. The CCC has to approve the document. So that's -- I don't think we should wait one minute longer when the last period is -- the ink is dried, we should have it out.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Instead of waiting until May? That's your recommendation?

Mr. Reid: Yeah, we can't wait until May.

Chair Luisi: All right. Let's see if anyone has any comments. Bill?

Mr. Tweit: Thanks. One question first. Eric, did you get any sense from the meeting with the CEQ about what kind of timing would work best in terms of release?

Mr. Reid: Specifically no. But, you know, there are other efforts going on, and Mr. Rauch is probably going to address some of them. But, you know, our product is going to be ready to go in a few months. And whether or not people are waiting for us to go first, do the work and go first and then our product beyond that, I am unsure of that. But that doesn't really matter to me.

When we're done and we're comfortable with the accuracy, that's the main thing. That's why we are delayed right now is because of accuracy. Once we attain the accuracy we want, I think we should roll it out. So that's like my opinion, but we didn't get a specific answer, I don't believe. Dave can tell you as well he was in the -- and Mike so.

Mr. Tweit: Thanks. That is helpful. I share your thoughts

that sooner is better in part just to -- I think there is a lot more benefit than there is sort of problem to be sort of in the lead of actually releasing accurate and scientifically supportable estimates of how much is actually protected under the various definitions of protection.

So getting out ahead of -- maybe a lot of the other assessments from other areas, I think, is overall a good idea. It does make a bit of a target, too, I suppose is the only downside. But setting the standard for how it should look, I think, that's the importance of getting it out there early.

And certainly, we felt a sense of urgency all the way through this process about making sure that our voice on this and our scientifically supported estimates are taken into account and earlier is better for that as well.

I assume we've got some ongoing discussions with Pacific states about what is my cost to house it and what it might look like to have the facilities for occasional review and update.

But it seems to me that just for starters, unless they are exorbitantly expensive, Pacific states, certainly we've got a lot of confidence in their ability to handle data like this to ensure that the accessibility is at the right levels. And they've met all of our needs on handling these kinds of data, both at the council level, but I'm also speaking from the state level, too. We've got a lot of confidence in them from that perspective as well.

Mr. Reid: Yeah, I appreciate that. But just to be clear, the initial contract was to do the work and that's it. There is no housing or anything like that. You know them better than I do but --

Mr. Tweit: I would assume the question --

Mr. Reid: -- it costs money.

Mr. Tweit: They're probably expecting a follow-up conversation. They usually know that building it usually comes with a follow-up request so.

Chair Luisi: Go Tom.

Mr. Nies: So I haven't had a lot of discussions with Michelle or the team about housing. But housing it, it seems like if it's the document we're talking about housing as opposed to all of the GIS supporting materials, I don't know why we wouldn't want to house it on our Fishery Management Council web page. I assume that's possible. Maybe it isn't.

With respect to retaining the GIS work, materials and that sort of thing, we'd have to look into that a little further. I don't know that we really want an external body hosting that stuff for us.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, Tom. Other comments? Merrick?

Mr. Burden: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sitting here thinking about the release of the report as soon as possible. And I agree with that intention. But then I look at our goal to also prepare a journal article on the same topic.

And I don't know if this is question for you, Eric, or if someone else is here that could answer it. I just pause a bit and start to ask myself if publishing the report would jeopardize the ability to publish a journal article. Sometimes, you know, the journal doesn't want that material out before they have published it.

I do think it's important for us to have a published journal, published article rather. So that's a question. I don't know if the committee has considered that and whether the report is of such a nature that it wouldn't pose that jeopardy. But that's what is running through my head. I don't know if you have a response to it.

Chair Luisi: Go ahead, Eric.

Mr. Reid: As far as the timing, you know, obviously our report to the CCC and then the release of that document is one thing. The journal article, which is, you know, we're working on that now. That would come after. And it is my understanding that there is no jeopardy in that time frame.

Chair Luisi: Jon Hare?

Dr. Hare: Yeah, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just

adding a bit of experience to the question. Some particular outlets might preclude publication, but I'm sure there will be outlets out there that would not preclude publication.

And then it comes back to if it's based on the GIS information, most journals now require the data to be publicly available so thinking about how you would host and serve that GIS information is also good to be thinking about in terms of the journal article can then refer to the site that you have hosting the material.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, Jon. John Gourley?

Mr. Gourley: Thank you, Chairman. Very good, Eric. I would agree that we should probably get it out as soon as possible. And I would think that the council should want to take control of the document and keep it in-house and put it on the website.

I would feel uneasy of all that work being given to somebody else to house. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, John. Carrie, is that your hand up? Okay.

Dr. Simmons: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question for Eric, I think. Are there any concerns with sending a press release that may have specific information in it regarding these areas without the final database that could change things, tweak things, change the report slightly? Is there a concern we're putting the cart before the horse on that? Thanks.

Mr. Reid: Well, in my mind, the intent is to make sure that the accuracy is 100 percent before we do anything, before the CCC even gets to look at the document for final approval.

After that, I've got all the confidence in the world where we'll be. So I don't know if that answers your question. I don't think there is any jeopardy there.

But, you know, over time, things will change, which is what do we do after this because this is a database based on, you know, whatever the date is. I can't even remember, sometime this year, what we have in place as of this year.

So it's going to have to be adjusted at some point in time but understanding that the document we're going to see now is going to be a representation of essentially history.

Chair Luisi: Chris?

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thanks, Eric. So the question about the press releases. Is the question do we do two press releases, like one, like an interim one now and then a final one? Or is the question whether or not we just do a final one?

Mr. Reid: That is the question, the last one. The question is how do you want to do it?

Dr. Moore: Oh, how do we want to.

Mr. Reid: How do you want to do it? Do you want to do something now? Do you want to do something later? I mean, it's really up to Mary just to be honest with you. But it's only -- we know this is happening. This is not happening in a vacuum. But it's really up to this body, you know, how you want to handle it.

But my original question is how does the CCC want to get this final report in order to approve it so then all these other things can happen?

Chair Luisi: Chris.

Dr. Moore: So I would suggest we wait until the final report for a press release. I don't see the value in an interim one that says we're almost done or you're going to get a report or there is a lot of cool stuff to anticipate. I don't even know what it would say. But I think we wait. So that would be my suggestion.

In terms of the timing, you know, we've done things virtually before. Certainly, I don't see any reason to wait until next May to approve a document that is done in January. So as soon as it is done, I think, you know, tee it up, send it out to folks and we review it and decide how best to deal with it.

But there's one step -- there is one other step, which is once the GIS contractor is done estimating the areas and putting together the maps, is that all going out to

the councils to review or is that just an internal, like, working group? We're counting on the working group to do that review.

Mr. Reid: Well, the working group will have to take the GIS info and then repopulate the tables with the data. The maps will be the GIS thing.

But, I mean, every council at this table is represented on the working group. I mean, it would seem to me that there would be some internal discussion about it. I mean, this whole process has involved eight people from the councils. But I know there has been internal discussions amongst the staff on how they handle that. You know, that's why the CCC has the final say, which means each council can treat it as they wish. But once it is done, it is done.

Chair Luisi: Okay. So I have heard that we want -- the general consensus I'm hearing is that we want to get this document out as soon as possible and not wait until May.

The second point was that we want to maintain this in-house and not go out to a third-party to host the information on the web.

Chris' suggestion on a press release coming out after the final document has been approved, you know, I feel comfortable with that. I don't know how others feel. But I can look around and see if there are any other comments. Tom?

Mr. Nies: To preface, I'm going to say I might be walking back on my earlier comment, just to readily admit that. You know, I think, it's one thing that it's pretty easy to publish the report on our web page, but I'm not so sure it's going to be so easy, depending what we want for the GIS data.

So as an example, on the East Coast, we're familiar with like the NROC Data Portal, which has all kinds of information that other people can query. If we're talking about doing something like that with our GIS stuff, I don't know if we've got the capability to do that on our web portal or if we've got the technical know-how to do that or if that's something we want to do.

So I don't know if the workgroup has thought through those and has a recommendation for how to do that or maybe that's what we should ask them is, what do they recommend on that stuff?

Chair Luisi: Bill?

Mr. Tweit: I'm nodding yes to Tom's suggestion. I was uncomfortable with how you phrased that. And I do think this is a question for the workgroup to dig into a little bit further.

I don't think it should take a lot of work. And I recognize I speak from the perspective of somebody who regards Pacific states as really part of our shop for things like this. So I recognize I've got a level of comfort with that that a lot of the other councils may not have.

But I think it is a viable alternative. I'm sure there are a few others. So I think the workgroup could sort that out pretty quickly. I would assume that's not a major task, and it may well just come down to who can do it the most cost effectively, but also who has really got the skills to handle those large kind of databases and make them accessible at the level that Dr. Hare mentioned, too, the ability to be able to provide it not just now but into perpetuity so.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, Bill. Chris?

Dr. Moore: So there are two aspects of what Tom brought up. One is the database for the GIS work and the other one is the communications aspect of the report, housing the report.

So in terms of the first, we have the experience with NRHA, where we have all of these databases that are actively being managed by Tori and Jessica and others for their work. So, you know, I think kicking it back to the working group for recommendations is appropriate and some of those folks have had that experience.

In terms of the communications part of it, Mary is going to talk about the Communications Committee later today and talk about where we are at with that. But one of the things that she has talked about is updating the council's website. So for folks -- I think folks know that we have a council's website that basically houses a lot of reports

and documents.

And one of the things that she is going to do or would like to do with the group is create additional pages for working group stuff, right? So we would have a page devoted to America the Beautiful with the report. So I think that's an easy ask and an easy thing to do.

The data stuff, again, I think we would have to work through that. But I don't expect that's going to be that difficult.

One other thing, the expectation is that that data is being stored to be updated. All right? So we're going to have to actively make sure that there is someone responsible for doing that. So I see a lot of heads nodding. So, okay. Thanks.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, Chris. So let me ask you, Eric, are you comfortable with the feedback you received on your questions at this point?

Mr. Reid: I am.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Okay. Okay. Let's move things along to Sam. He's going to give an update on interagency efforts on this. It's all you, Sam.

Mr. Rauch: All right. Thank you. I'm going to give the update on the federal efforts on America the Beautiful, which dovetails with what the council is doing. And I will talk a little bit about the timing and why folks think that submitting it sooner is better.

I'll see if this will work, yes. All right. To start off, I just wanted to remind folks that although we do talk about conserving 30 percent of the land and water, there is a broader effort encompassed by America the Beautiful. And I wanted just to remind briefly before I get into that other part about these six areas that we are being tasked to focus on early in the process to make some progress.

One is to look at supporting locally led conservation of park projects and communities that disproportionately lack access to nature and its benefits.

We are also tasked to review our most successful

conservation programs to determine how to better include and support tribal governments. This could include working with Congress to revise underlying statutes. We're developing technical assistance and capacity building grants to support indigenous led conservation efforts.

And we are supposed to take steps to

improve engagement with the American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians on the care and management of public lands and waters, particularly regarding ceremonial sites, trust and treaty rights. And some of the stuff we talked earlier today about access and equity dovetails within that processes using the council system to improve participation and looking at the ways we deal with that.

We are also tasked with taking broadly supported steps to stem the decline of fish and wildlife populations in their habitats throughout the country, including through wildlife corridors and fish passage opportunities. And this also dovetails well with the Infrastructure Act, which we've talked about before, which includes a large pot of money to work on fish passage issues.

The report explicitly calls for the expansion of the National Marine Sanctuary System and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. And also importantly in the report is the report from December. You may recall it also recognizes the work of the councils explicitly under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and calls for us to work closely with you all to identify areas or networks of areas where fishery management efforts would support long-term conservation goals.

So there has been a recognition from the beginning of the important work of the councils and that we want to work with you all and that is the context, I know, that you are -- we just heard the report about what you all are doing. But this is where it is explicitly envisioned and asked for by the administration. So we do look forward to the final report. I know we've got the draft.

Also we've supposed to at prioritizing management planning that identify lands and waters that are appropriate to be conserved and managed for outdoor

recreation, to incentivize and reward voluntary conservation efforts of fishermen, ranchers, farmers and forest owners and to create jobs by new putting new diverse generations of Americans to work, such as through the Civilian Climate Corps and others.

And we particularly have a GulfCorps and a Vet Corps, which I think we've talked with you about, which is trying to work with various groups of individuals. Put them to work. Train them on conservation efforts to meet our objects but to create a lot of jobs while doing it.

All right. That's the background. The update on conservation. So this is -- I know that you are all very interested in this. We are still working on the definition of conservation.

We made progress. But as I've indicated before in this group, I believe the final product would be more of a framework of things which contribute to conservation rather than a traditional definition that we are applying.

So it will be the elements of -- the hallmarks of what is conservation. And then we will evaluate certain areas against the framework and decide whether or not they fit within conservation or other categories of things that could contribute to conservation but are not necessarily conservation.

I would just underline that it is conservation, and not preservation, not protection. It does envision a continuum of actions that could contribute to conservation, not just in a marine-protected or some protected area on land.

We want to commend you on bringing your efforts particularly going all the way to CEQ and talking with them about this. I think that has been helpful, the work that you've done so far. I realize it's done. It has been very helpful to put your thinking on there to ensure that fishery management consideration is the complexities and the benefits and the wide diversity of actions for which you've engaged in conservation actions are applied. Sometimes that is missed on people. And I think you helped to bring that into alignment.

We continue to discuss fishing issues as we work on the details of the database, but it's still not complete. We still don't have a formal public definition or framework for conservation. I don't have a timeline for when that is going to happen. But as soon as we have a publicly available timeline, we will let you know.

All right. Within that though, we've talked about an atlas, a conservation atlas, which we will outline a number of the areas that are potentially conserved here and discuss how they fit within that continuing conservation.

We are still planning -- the administration still plans on releasing a beta version, so not the final version, but a beta version of that atlas for December 2022. At this point, I don't expect that it will be a comprehensive analysis of all of the various areas.

And so like for the council areas, my hope is that they take some sample of the council areas that you have proposed and evaluate them. But I do not believe that they will be able to look at all of the council areas that are in there or all of anybody else's areas.

So I think that they will do some and that will help guide us as to what they are looking for as to what counts and what doesn't count. But it's still a beta so it won't be the final decision on any of those things.

And they are looking for how you can use this suite of conservation to meet the overarching larger goals, which we have talked about before. This effort is not designed just to achieve a magical number but to actually achieve some progress as it pertains to climate change, access for underserved communities and things like that.

So a couple of updates on related topics. We have a new Marine and Coastal Area-Based Management FACA Committee, federal advisory committee.

This is an outgrowth of the old Marine-Protected Area Advisory Committee, but it is different. It involves a broader suite of participants and a broader mandate. That MPA FACA committee had been disbanded. And rather than re-engage it as it is, it encompasses that mandate but is broader.

It's going to provide advice to NOAA on science-based approaches to area-based marine protection, conservation restoration, including, but not limited to, the actions related to implementation of the American Beautiful initiative.

We are looking to announce it formally this fall. That will be the approval to set up the joint committee and to call for nominations. So we haven't done that yet, but it's coming.

We recently determined that it's going to be co-led by fishery Service and NOS. So unlike the old MPA center, which was led by NOS, this is going to be co-chaired by -- or co-led by us and NOS and Fisheries Service. Kelly Denit, the director of Sustainable Fisheries, will be our lead for NOS, the National Ocean Service. John Armor, the Director of the National Marine Sanctuaries, will be the lead.

And we encourage you as we put out the call for nominations for participation, we encourage you to either apply or to make sure that you can distribute it so that we get a breadth of people that can give us perspectives on coastal area-based management. Obviously, the councils have some unique experience that they can bring to that table.

Another committee that we wanted to brief you on was the Federal Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation. This was created or re-established on July 20 of 2022.

Commerce signed an interagency MOU with other agencies to be a part of this committee. The charter and work plan are to be developed within 120 to 180 days.

It is intended to support the recreational part of the activities under the America the Beautiful but also look at the broader recreational initiative that the government has.

There is an annually rotated chair to be established. The Park Service is going to hold the chair initially. But it will rotate after that. The principal is going to meet twice a year, and Russ Dunn, who is our senior policy advisor for Recreational Fisheries, will be our member on that.

Finally, a few additional efforts. The Interior Department is setting up a website, conservation.gov, which will include the Atlas, grants, meeting opportunities and other pertinent information.

They have requested our help, NOAA's help to ensure that our equities are appropriately included, and we're working with them on that.

We continue to review and develop a number of actions from these various actions that contribute to this already mentioned GulfCorps and Vet Corps. We're working on guides for incorporating climate change considerations into our EFH consultations.

We've engaged not just the area-based effort of this CCC, but also the Habitat Working Group on habitat and council-specific recommendations that can support these kinds of initiatives.

We're working on regional climate science needs that support the climate portion of this initiative and other kinds of actions that we're engaged in. So it's not just -- go back to the very beginning. It's not just the 30x30. We're engaged across the board with a number of actions to try to improve conservation and try to improve the broader outcome, which is to use area-based tools and the benefits of management to achieve access issues, climate resiliency and other issues that are laid out there, not just 30 percent.

So I wanted to thank the councils individually and as a whole for coming and providing input into all of that, particularly for the council efforts that we're doing. And we look forward to doing that.

But given that the Atlas is coming out beta version at the end of the year is why I believe the CCC is well advised to try to get its final product to us as quickly as possible so that it can be included in that, even in part. And I would take any questions.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks, Sam, for your presentation. Any questions or comments for Sam? Any questions or comments? I think you got off easy there, Sam.

Mr. Rauch: I hope so.

Chair Luisi: Nice job.

Mr. Rauch: They want to get you to the baseball game.

Chair Luisi: Right. Okay. Well, that concludes our business under the America the Beautiful initiative.

I want to turn next to Jessica Coakley with the Mid-Atlantic Council staff to provide us an update on the Northeast Regional Marine Fisheries Habitat Assessment.

And so, Jessica, just so you know, I made a comment yesterday about, this is like that lull in the day. And you're a fast talker. So I told people if they need to get up -- if you see a bunch of people get up to get coffee, that's why they're doing it so. But it's all good. So whenever you are ready, you may have at it.

Northeast Regional Marine Fisheries Habitat Assessment (NRHA)

Ms. Coakley: Great. Thank you. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to you today about the Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment.

I'd like to recognize my co-leads on this project, Michaelle Bachman from the New England Fishery Management Council, who is also on the line, and Chris Haak from Monmouth University. He's working through a cooperative agreement with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. He's one of our co-leads.

Tori Kentner, previously a contractor with NOAA Fisheries now with Mid-Atlantic Council staff, is our spatial ecologist. And Laurel Smith with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center is also on that team as well.

So when I was preparing my presentation, I decided to take my last slide and move it up to be the first slide because this project really did take a lot of collaboration and cooperation with a lot of partners to make it possible.

About five years ago when our council was contemplating beginning an essential fish habitat review, we really recognized the need to try to improve the fish habitat science in our region.

So at the time Chris Moore reached out to Tom Nies, our partners over at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Bob Beal, our NOAA Fisheries partners and a bunch of other organizations and individuals, and they formed a steering committee.

And that leadership level steering committee set out goals for this project. And we spent about a year and a half developing a work plan with that steering committee to direct work from 2019 to 2022 to develop this Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment.

As part of that work, we formed action teams and had a huge number of collaborators involved in those as well as incorporated information from other spinoff projects that we were working concurrently with that.

So I just wanted to make sure that we acknowledged everyone upfront. We usually do it at the end, but I thought it was really important. And a special thanks, you know, to the councils and all the support from NOAA Fisheries as we worked through this project.

So the steering committee set out the goal to describe and characterize estuarine, coastal and offshore fish habitat distribution, abundance and quality in the northeast. And they set out four main actions. And these actions really recognize the differences in the quality of information we might have available both in the inshore and the offshore environment.

So we were conducting an inshore fish habitat assessment, so looking at information on fish distribution in abundance and then looking at information on habitat distribution and then taking a crack at getting status and trend information for those habitats as well.

We also took up habitat vulnerability, including responses to changes in climate, looking at spatial descriptions of species' habitat use in the offshore areas. And then packaging all of this up with habitat data visualization and decision support tools so that all of our partners, as we develop this project, could benefit from using this information for their own organizations.

So the steering committee identified the geographic

scope as the northeastern U.S. So we are looking from the North Carolina, South Carolina boundary northwards up into the Gulf of Maine and then working from the inshore to the offshore environment. So it's starting at the main high water mark, including estuaries and they're working out to the shelf break.

And we recognize that at some point as we move further offshore we just run out of data. But in terms of setting bounds for where we would be looking for fish habitat information that was what we set as our boundaries.

The steering committee also identified 65 plus focus species that they wanted us to focus our efforts on in terms of information gathering as part of this habitat assessment.

All of the species that were identified are important to managers. So we included the Mid-Atlantic Council managed species, New England Council managed species, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission managed species and a few highly migratory and habitat area particularly concerned species.

Now as we work through this assessment process, we recognized that some of these species were extremely data poor. But as part of the assessment, we tried to make sure that we had some information compiled for all of these species to the best of our team's abilities with what we had available.

So over the last three years, the groups and our action teams have developed a number of assessment products. Some of the products that we have shared out as part of this process were work products that we were initially developing as part of the assessment.

But as we were developing them, we thought they might be useful to our other partners that are researchers or others because, as you know with a project like this, the data digs in the beginning and finding information is a really big lift so to save people from having to repeat what we've done and give them a better starting point for their own work in the region.

So we developed a data inventory. And this included

catch data from state and federal fisheries' independent surveys throughout the region. And we actually developed comparison tables looking across the years, and the differences in the years and the time periods that they sampled and all that background on those different fisheries independent surveys.

We also gathered information on environmental data sets and many of these data sets were used as model co-variates in some of the modeling work that I'm going to touch on briefly.

And as part of this data inventory, we developed one page metadata documents for each of these survey and data sets. So it's a quick resource that tells you about the data set and what the time frame it is, the coverage of it, whether it is available online, where to access it or who to contact to access it.

So, again, super helpful documents that we felt would be useful for the region.

In terms of habitat use, we developed species profiles, so touching on life history and habitat use for each of the focused species. These were originally intended to be background for our modelers, but we decided to clean them up and share them out as part of this project.

For habitat use, we developed stage-based single species distribution models as well as joint community species distribution models, with the latter being a really new and innovative approach, really cutting edge work, very different than the stock assessment models. You know, these habitat models are a whole other sort of creature in terms of what they are able to do so really trying to advance that habitat science component.

And we developed an Inshore Habitat Report that we're just getting ready to load up on our Data Explorer.

For climate vulnerability, we developed a species habitat crosswalk that I'm going to talk about actually in the next slide.

And for all of this, to package up all of this information, we developed our Data Explorer. And it's an R Shiny application. And we've used that explorer to allow end

users to explore the data itself.

You can't download the data directly from our site, but you can use it to explore that information as well as to share other products, reports, documentation that we've produced as part of this project all in one place. And we're trying to work with our partners to serve up some curated sets of our information on some of these other data portals.

And lastly we're working on scientific publications and reports. There is already a modeling methods paper that has been submitted, and I think it's close to being published. But there are others that we plan to have and develop.

So what does this all look like? It looks like a lot of information. As I noted, we've got that data inventory. We've got the metadata pages. We've built the Explorer. We've developed models, some tools to really explore the inshore fish habitat data in more detail and the crosswalk and there are lots and lots and lots of reports that we have developed. We're still loading up reports as we speak, trying to package up those final products. So a lot of really exciting work that we think will be very useful.

So I wanted to highlight this climate vulnerability assessment crosswalk because this was a spinoff project that we got some additional funding to do, and we thought it would be really useful.

Michelle Bachman from the New England Council actually helped lead that project. We were able to run that through the New England Council. And essentially it's a synthesis that NOAA Fisheries did the fish species climate vulnerability assessments.

And then within our region, they also did a fish habitat climate vulnerability assessment that looked at the specific habitat types. But we thought it would be great to figure out how to put all of that information together to really see the nexus of where are the vulnerable habitats, where are the vulnerable species, where did those two meet?

We also have the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat

Partnership in our region that developed a species habitat dependency matrix.

So we worked with NOAA Fisheries and some of our partners and formed up a team that essentially developed a matrix and narratives that put all these pieces together. And they highlight some of the critical and most concerning intersections for species and habitat climate vulnerability. So where that nexus is, we can pull out and say these are the things that really are going to be most vulnerable for this particular species.

So those products are being shared by the Data Explorer. I think they are 80 percent, 70, 80 percent loaded up on our site right now. So that's a really, I think, great and useful product that came out of this and figuring out how to tie all of these really interesting climate pieces together so that managers can really figure out how to apply that information to their fisheries management.

So our modeling strategy for NRHA, we have taken what we thought was a really comprehensive approach. Chris Haak is an excellent modeler and really likes to think like a fish as he puts it, or he's trying to think like a fish when he models fish habitat.

So we've developed a stage-based approach. So partitioning into distinct classes based on ontogeny, juveniles and adults in the hope of giving us better resolution on habitat shifts.

We also developed this joint species distribution model that that's applied to so using this spatiotemporal approach. And that's being compared to individual generalized additive models so for individual species.

And really this new modeling approach, we hope, is going to provide us all with improved predictions and improved ecological insights in terms of our fish species and their interactions with one another.

So the modeling also incorporated some really unique and dynamic co-variates. So having temporally varying predictors and then predicting sort of the ecological function and interactions of these species.

So the approach that was used, it's called community

level basis function modeling. I am not a modeler, and I don't spent my time on GitHub looking around for code. But for folks that do and do model, there is a manuscript that is right here. You can go ahead and look that up. There is a methods manuscript.

There is an R package. You know, you can get the code and run it in your free time. It will probably lock up your computer for like a week, maybe kill it forever, but you could do it if you'd like to. So that is available to folks.

But the way we really apply this CBFM approach and what Chris was able to do, was we had 97 individual species life stages that were incorporated into the modeling. And it includes demersal, pelagic, benthic species, mainly our managed resources, but they also included some common prey items. He did training and testing. We included spring and fall surveys. And he looked at some really interesting predictors.

So we included the usual temperature salinity, sea surface height, those kinds of things. But he also explored really interesting variables like the optical environment and hydrodynamic stress. So, you know, a fish doesn't choose, you know, I'm just going to hang out at like 15 meters here. That's where I'd like to be. There are reasons they choose to be in that space.

So we modeled using depth and also compared that to models using optical environment, which may affect how the fish see in their environment and seek refuge and seek prey, so using these other kinds of dynamic characteristics as well as benthic habitat characteristics.

And, again, using some really cutting edge modeling approaches, we've developed some really interesting product outcomes.

So I'm going to share with you -- this is just an image, a screen grab from our modeling beta test site. We actually call it the sandbox. We haven't fully loaded this up onto our Data Explorer yet because we're just sort of testing it out here first.

But last June, we had a really great review with our Scientific and Statistical Committee. It was a joint panel review between New England and Mid-Atlantic. And they

came out with some really great recommendations for the modeling work as well as the Data Explorer.

So we've held off loading up all of this modeling work until we were able to work through all of those recommendations. And we've been able to take care of that work. I know the SSC got an update in September. They were really happy with the progress that our team has made in terms of this habitat work.

So this should be up maybe in the next week or two. We'll have this loaded up. But you'll see -- it will have the observed and the predicted distributions for species. This is just summer flounder adults.

We'll have the predictive variables. So there are variables that are really driving those distributions and what those functions look like on the right-hand side. Uh oh, okay. Really exciting. Really exciting stuff. I didn't do that.

But also down in that bottom right corner, that's actually an optical environment profile that shows sort of the optical environment that summer flounder uses. So you can actually look across different species, like we have one for winter flounder. And then we can see that winter flounder, their optical environment that they prefer is a little bit different than what summer flounder prefers. So really getting really interesting inferences about why species are picking different habitats. So really cool stuff.

We're also going to get information about predictor importance, so what factors are most influential for these habitat types. I threw one with all of the species out there because right now until it is loaded up our modelers didn't want you to be able to take, you know, all of these home with you for the individual species names. But we'll have it broken out by individual species so you can actually get a much closer look at the species of interest on the website.

And also those interactions that aren't explained by all of the covariates, the explanations may be these biotic interactions that are occurring between species. So this is a matrix that looks at sort of those indirect interactions within species, whether they are positive,

they're negative, they're strong or they are weak correlations.

So there is potential to gain some insight whether there was community dynamics or explaining some of the differences that we see in the distributions. So, again, cutting edge, really exciting. We're really looking forward to working with all of this information in our region.

So some of the applications for our products. Obviously, essential fish habitat, that's a really big priority for the Mid-Atlantic Council and New England Council. So we're hoping this is going to help us with improved text descriptions and maps, help us better identify habitat areas of concern and then exploring some of these potential for shifts due to climate change and better understanding these interactions between our species.

We are working really closely with Laurel Smith, one of our co-leads, who is helping spearhead folding some of this information into our State of the Ecosystem Reports.

And we have already been involved in helping to address ecosystem terms of reference for one of our butterflyfish stock assessments in 2022. And we have been invited to engage in some of our Stock Assessment Workgroups for the upcoming year to help with addressing that term of reference for our region.

So as I noted earlier, we are hoping to make this information widely available and share it up through other Data Explorers where possible. So that is something we're going to continue to explore and see if some of these curated sets could be shared out through those.

And with that, I'm not sure how we are on time because I've just been talking really fast. But if we have time, we can take maybe five minutes, and I can demo the app live here?

Chair Luisi: Sure.

Ms. Coakley: If that's okay?

Chair Luisi: If we can make it work.

Ms. Coakley: Yeah, I think we can. So we did this earlier. I'll turn this off while I talk to myself for now. All right. So I think we are -- do I see my mouse moving here? Oh, yeah, we're cooking with fire here.

All right. So this is our Data Explorer that has been developed. As I noted, it was programmed in R Shiny. And we actually for the first two years that we were working on development, we were just working on the free version that you can get online. We just recently upgraded to get some better features. But it's something that's publicly available.

So through this Explorer, we've tried to serve up all of our products. And we've got different views in terms of how you would like to look at that different information.

So I'm going to start with our survey view. We've got a pulldown menu. Hopefully this is big enough that folks can see. And in the pulldown menu, you can select all of our surveys or you can select a single survey. You can select year ranges. And you can go ahead and run your analysis. And so this allows you -- in this case, I've actually selected all of our surveys. And it's just going to think for a second.

Okay. So we've got all of our surveys. I will note because the National Marine Fisheries Service actually extended early in the 60s and 70s, they sampled down in to the southern region, so we do have sets that sort of extend a little bit further down back in the earlier part of the time period.

But you can take a look at the top 20 species by abundance that occurred across an individual survey or all the surveys, the top 20 species by biomass and a species list of all the species that were caught in that individual survey and a note of either the abundance or the biomass overall.

We've got a cluster diagram. And this is a Bray-Curtis similarity index that shows you which species were most frequently caught in those surveys with other species. So sort of associations when they were most frequently caught in similar tows.

You can take a look at the seasonal temperatures,

surface temperature or bottom temperature if the surveys samples those and provided those as well as seasonal salinities that were sampled from the individual surveys.

So we also have a species view so you can take a look at information for -- if you would like to look at this through the lens of an individual species. So in this case, let's see. Let's just select a Rhode Island survey, coastal Massachusetts, coastal Maine because I think the species is kind of coastal, okay, Acadian redfish. I'm going to go ahead and run my analysis.

There we go. So you can get a distribution map where in those surveys that species is found or was caught in that survey. Again, taking a look at abundance or biomass over time. You can split things out by seasons or years as well, get a relative abundance plot for the surveys, taking a look at the length data. So in that survey, what lengths of Acadian redfish were actually caught so it gives you an idea of sort of the sampling distribution there.

And then we also have species reports. I noted that just as background for our modelers, we created these different kinds of species reports. So we went ahead and we loaded these reports up on the website. So we have the species profiles that are just background on life history. We have a report on essential fish habitat, what was designated for the council.

And then there were climate vulnerability narratives that we talked about. We also have those loaded up on here as well. And all of these reports are downloadable. So you can just download it as a PDF and take it with you.

We also, as I noted, we have a tab for the modeling. Right now we just has some placeholders in here until we can, you know, finish up in our sandbox beta page and then get this all loaded up and make sure it's nice and clean. So we'll have more details provided here.

That habitat crosswalk project, we have the species narratives. But in order to create those narratives, we created these big matrices. So we were able to go through and break those down and create an actual species crosswalk matrix. So this is for alewife. And so

in addition to those narratives, you can visually look and see what were the most vulnerable habitat types for alewife. And you can hover over these individual habitat types.

It gives you details on the life history stage, what the HCVA rankings were, what the ACFHP dependency rankings were. So it's a different way of visualizing that information.

And then the last piece I will show you before I get to the about us, is we created tons of reports. And so I mentioned those metadata pages. So we have a metadata page for each of the surveys and the data sets that we used.

Again, a quick one pager will let you know where to go to get that information, if it's available online or who to contact in terms of the contact agencies.

We included our bottom trawl survey comparison information, so comparing all of the different trawl and seine surveys within the region. That's all available online here.

A seine survey comparison, and we thought this we kind of helpful. I thought this was a great thing that was added was the data collection timelines.

So in a snapshot you can look across all of these surveys, see when the data was collected in terms of year. But also look at the seasons and months when these surveys sampled. So it gives you a quick snapshot of, you know, the coverage of that information.

And then lastly we have a page that talks a little bit about us and acknowledges all of our partner members.

So as you might guess, we're really excited about this project. We are continuing to load up additional pieces as we go along. We are right now working with some of our benthic data, our scallop and our clam survey information and working those into our models.

So there are a lot of pieces that we are still working on. But I'm so proud of our teams and what we accomplished in three years of really dedicated work. And everyone worked together. We had really lofty

goals. And I think we made really good strategic choices about what we could accomplish in our three years and what we could develop and what might be useful for our marine fish habitat. So I'll just leave it with that. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Jessica. It's an amazing amount of work and very impressive. So the next chance you get, make sure to tell the team that I'm sure everybody is thinking the same thing so.

Let's see if anyone on the committee has any questions or wants to provide any comments to Jessica. John?

Mr. Carmichael: Kind of a weedy comment maybe. But I'm just sort of wondering, like you mentioned, pieces loaded up and that. And, like, does all of this live and like the data sets and all that stuff and how is it paid for? Are there costs associated with that? Just really interested in that kind of highly detailed aspect of it if you can share.

Ms. Coakley: So one of the upgrades that we made with the application was a little bit more data storage because you can only store so much with the free version and then as you start to put more stuff in, they take up space.

So I think, Chris, if I remember, was it just for the application, was it a few thousand dollars for the year for the application to kind of get the additional features for it?

Most of our -- the documents itself, those were loaded up as sort of PDFs and then we have sort of the data sets that are queried through the application. But it's pretty user friendly. And if folks are interested, I mean, Tori Kentner is our spatial ecologist that got really savvy about coding and R Shiny. So she's been doing a lot of the coding and the programming to kind of bring this application together for us. So I'm sure she'd be happy to share details.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks for that. Dave?

Mr. Witherell: I just wanted to say it out loud for the record, a very impressive amount of here, incredible. And I see value for this tool beyond what you listed

briefly here.

Just looking at the changes in projected distributions due to climate change and that little piece is going to be really valuable, I think, as we try to manage for the future.

Chair Luisi: Marcos?

Mr. Hanke: Following up what Dave just said, in the Caribbean we are having a lot of changes on the coral reefs and on the substrate because those studies are not necessarily conducted because the emphasis are on the healthy coral reefs and the ecology of it.

And the fishermen and what we hear from the people is that there is volume. Those habitats are considered impacted where there is microbiology and so on, where you have commercially important species.

Do you think that this tool will be helpful or it can be used to include those data sets and to see the ecological or commercial importance of those new areas that will be formed for sure by climate change or any other change?

Ms. Coakley: So I do think there is value. I mean, as Dave pointed out, having a tool where you can understand how these changes are occurring and maybe be able to just react to them.

Both through our modeling work and some of this inshore fish habitat data work, I know as we fold these into our EFH designations, we're going to be putting some thought into how we incorporate, I guess, the anticipated changes into those designations. That's one of the things I'm hoping is a conversation we can have with our council. Like maybe we need to include some of these areas where we think things are moving to in the next few years to be a little bit more proactive to make sure those are included.

In terms of specific habitat types and distributional data, so things like submerged aquatic vegetation and some of like the oyster data, we don't have it right now on our map service. NOAA Fisheries has SAV data. Winds data is through the National Wetlands inventory, that Fish and Wildlife Service host.

So we've highlighted a lot of that fish habitat specific information in our Inshore Habitat Report that should be loaded up actually this week. So those are all pieces.

I think that it is really important for us to look at the fish piece but then also look at that habitat piece and by incorporating the climate vulnerability work I think that NOAA Fisheries had done.

We have created these narratives to be able to figure out exactly what those critical habitat types are that might be impacted so we can incorporate those into how we designate EFH and then how we try to manage for resilience. I think that's going to be an important part. So there are a lot of moving parts. But we're trying to pull them all together.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thanks. Tom?

Mr. Nies: So thanks, Jessica, and thanks to the whole team. You know, one of the things that I'm struggling with here a little bit is this tool seems to have a lot of functionality that NOAA's DisMAP tool does not have, like the projected distributions due to climate change which I don't, unless I'm wrong, I don't think DisMAP has that.

Is the Agency intending to pull your work into DisMAP to make DisMAP more useful or are these going to be two independent things here where, you know, from my point of view, yours is far more useful and has far more utility to us than the current DisMAP project. I don't know what the future plans are for DisMAP.

Ms. Coakley: So both with the Mid-Atlantic Data Portal, the Northeast Data Portal and DisMAP, our team has had some conversations with all three groups. I think it's been maybe about a year since we've spoken with the DisMAP team directly.

But we had suggested to them that, you know, if they were interested in sharing up some of these distributions models or that other information, a curated set on their site that maybe links back to our more detailed work, we would be willing to do that. And I think that is something that we're trying to explore with those other data portals.

I guess it's a question the extent to which the NOAA

teams want to incorporate other sort of outside information into those portals.

Dr. Hare: Yeah, I think it's an excellent question, Tom. So thank you. So obviously I haven't thought of it much until now.

But DisMAP is a national tool. And it presents, you know, trawl survey data from around the country, and this is a regional tool. So, you know, they are like thinking how do we leverage the two? You know, does this type of tool, the habitat assessment type tool get built out nationally? That would be one thing to consider.

And then the other piece is, you know, going back to the earlier conversation that Kristen talked about, you know, the Climate Ecosystem Fisheries Initiative is going to be developing, you know, much improved climate projections.

Do we then take those climate projections and couple it with the modeling on this habitat assessment and then create new climate projections as part of this habitat assessment?

So I think the important part is that we have all of these groups, which have some of the same people, keep communicating about and working forward to not duplicate effort and to continue to build value.

Chair Luisi: Okay. Thank you. Anything else for Jessica Merrick?

Mr. Burden: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Jessica. That is a very impressive tool, just seconding what Dave Witherell was indicating.

Suppose hypothetically there was interest in another council, like the Pacific Council or somebody, that could see the value in this for their region. Do you have a sense for what we would be looking at if we were to say, okay, let's take this platform and let's adapt it to a different council region?

Ms. Coakley: So I think there is definitely the potential for that. And I know in our discussions with some of our NOAA partners at like Habitat Conservation, you know, they wanted -- they've been really helpful in providing

some support for the work that we've been doing. And I know they were also interested in making sure that as we share this out that the folks know that there is a lot of interest and willingness to work to figure out maybe how to build some of these tools out in other regions and help support that.

So one of the things that we did have that I think was really useful was both Chris Haak and Tori Kentner, who worked on our, you know, leads groups, they were working on our project full-time as analysts. So having that support to work with all of these other team members and co-leads and action teams to do that work and really move it forward was really helpful.

As I noted, we used R Shiny, which was short of freeware, you know, an application. We were able to build that out. And we were able to find support between the counsels, between NOAA Fisheries, Habitat Conservation to really keep those analysts on and working, you know, to help get all of this work, done.

Because a lot of the folks involved, including myself, and Michaelle Bachman is the lead, and Laurel Smith are NOAA, we have other jobs, too. This is part of our job. But like I do the clam fishery management plan. And Michaelle is dealing with wind energy in the northeast.

So we all have a lot of other things on our plate so we were able to really work collaboratively and get all that done.

But, you know, we've talked about going back as a team and really documenting all the steps that we've gone through, maybe in a paper or publication, you know, to kind of share that out. And I know that we would be happy to share that with any region to help lay out the steps that might be involved with short of mimicking this type of a project in your own region.

Chair Luisi: There would also be consulting fees charged to your council as well so. Okay. Anything else for Jessica? All right, Jessica, thanks again for all the hard work and thanks for your presentation.

Manny, if you're online, I'll turn it over to you before we break. Manny, are you online if you can unmute

yourself.

Mr. Duenas: Hello?

Chair Luisi: Yes. We got you.

Mr. Duenas: Yeah, can you hear?

Chair Luisi: We can hear you.

Mr. Duenas: You got me?

Chair Luisi: We hear you.

Mr. Duenas: Okay. Thank you. All right. Thank you. I am quite impressed by this exercise. Just a word of caution because I come from the Marianas and when the President decided that he wanted to create huge monuments in our region in the Western Pacific, all of this data was used against us in fisheries management.

You know, they keep expanding the monument area from 50 miles to 200 miles. We have practically 70 percent of our access areas closed. And, you know, it's really ironic because I hear all the information given by all the presenters.

And the strange part about it is when the environmentalists or the people that pursue these endeavors to constantly claim more of the ocean for conservation, it seems like it is the NOAA people are providing the documents.

So I am very concerned that -- and also in the Marianas, we have over 300 species that we consume on a local level. And as so-called climate change, we call it rainy season and dry season.

When we have a torrential downpour, we have a huge algae bloom around our island, which provides more forage grounds for our herbivores, which also helps our carnivores because they eat our herbivores. So at the same time, you know, people have to understand that different species have different attributes as far as what they eat. So we need to include this in this so-called EFH exercise because the replacement of species is common in our area.

Like I said, we have over 300 species. I wish we had only one, that way we can only deal comfortably with one. But the range of our species covers 11 times greater than the mainland United States in our ocean. And we're always the target of some conservation measure.

So I applaud everything that is being said, America the Beautiful and everything, and I appreciate finally being recognized after being up at 2:00 a.m. every morning.

I'm just concerned that this might be taken a step further. Ten years ago there was a plan by NOAA to establish a preservation listing, a conservation area listing. And my only question at the end of the day was we can get on the list. But as our councils develop alternative plans, how do we get off the list? So that is my major issue is that I don't see any caveats placed in this exercise in any of the presentations today to actually have the council be empowered to amend any of our documents that we submit for this marine institution. And it really concerns me.

And like was earlier mentioned, it is a great idea. But it should be addressed region by region, and it should also look at the issues as far as the different species that replace certain species. We have coral eaters that are replaced are herbivores.

I'm sorry I'm taking so much time but I thank you for the presentation and the recognition. I'm done.

Chair Luisi: Thank you, Manny. You deserve all the time you need if you've been g4tting up at 2 o'clock in the morning to listen to this conversation. So thanks.

Mr. Duenas: Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thanks for your comment. Okay. We're going to go ahead and break. It's 3:20. We'll break for 15 minutes and come back at 3:35 and we'll pick up with our CCC committee updates. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 3:19 p.m. and resumed at 3:36 p.m.)

Preventing Harassment in Councils

Mr. Issenberg: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Actually, Stephanie are going to -- Stephanie and I are going to share this presentation.

And then as you noted, I believe Sandi from the Department of Commerce General Counsel Employment and Labor Law Division is on the line. I think she has spoken to the council on a number of occasions about this, and so I think you're familiar with her as well.

So here's the outline of what we're going to talk about. I'm going to hit the first couple of points, and then Stephanie will pick up with the training plan.

I know that the issue of preventing harassment is very important to all of us, and I'm very pleased with the progress we've made on these issues, particularly on the development of a couple of draft model policies that I'll talk about.

Our goal for this session is to hopefully finalize these model harassment prevention policies.

Just one thing I want to note before I go on is that the - - these policies relate to sensitive employment issues. We've had several closed CCC sessions related to these issues. And this open session is an opportunity to talk about these policies generally and to finalize them in a public forum.

It's not an appropriate place to talk about in detail specific situations or how the policies might apply to, you know, hypothetical situations. So we're going to try and keep this conversation general. If needed, we can have offline conversations or we can schedule another closed session to talk about, you know, the more specific types of issues.

So just by way of background and context, as some of you might remember, in 2019 after some discussion about these issues generally, the CCC made a recommendation to develop a harassment policy to protect council staff and participants in the council process.

Since then, we've discussed these issues at several

additional meetings both open and closed. We've worked with a small group of executive directors to ensure that we are thinking practically about these issues. And we've presented drafts of these documents to you.

We've really appreciated the opportunity to work with you on these sensitive issues. Given the complexities of the council work environment, it's been a long process to develop these policies, but we now have two model policies that represent best practices that each individual council can adopt.

The two policies, one is designed to protect council staff, and the other is designed to protect what we've called council process participants, which is basically everybody else who participates in the council process, from harassment and to provide a framework for addressing any alleged incidents.

They also help ensure that councils, like any other organization, any business, any government entity, any other type of organization, are meeting their legal obligations as it relates to harassment allegations.

The policies emphasize that harassment is not and should not be tolerated and provide a framework for reviewing allegations, ending any actual incidents of harassment, and taking disciplinary action as appropriate.

Just a little bit of detail about the two separate policies. And those two policies were included in the materials for the meeting. The policies are distinguished based on who allegedly experienced harassment.

So as I said, one is a policy that addresses where employees allegedly are the subjects of harassment, and that's whether they're -- the alleged perpetrator is another council employee, whether it's a -- some other process participant. If it's the council employee who's the alleged victim, then that policy applies.

The other policy, the council process participant policy, applies if anyone else is the alleged victim. And again, it doesn't matter in that context who the alleged harasser is, it's strictly based on who -- who was the target of the alleged harassment.

As you look at these policies, I think it'll be very obvious that there's a big difference in the level of detail in the policy, in the two policies. And the reason for that is the staff policy is very detailed because there's a specific legal relationship there in terms of the employee's relationship to the council as an employee.

And there's a well-defined legal framework for how to deal with those types of situations. And that policy basically addresses that framework, and I think you've heard me say in other meetings that it essentially exists -- it essentially reflects existing best practices and expectations.

The process participant policy is much more general. And that's because there are so many different kind of variations of who's involved there. The employment identity of the particular person. They could be a federal employee, they could be a state employee, they could be a private citizen.

And you pair that with another potential, you know, on one side with the potential victim and then on the other side with the potential perpetrator. And so there's all sorts of relationships there. And it's hard to say with any specificity exactly what is going to be required.

And so that policy is more general and provides some general guidance as to what to do and how to respond in those types of circumstances.

Another issue we've talked about with the CCC and I know has been a concern outside the scope of specific conduct that reflects harassment as that term is used in a legal context. I know there's a lot of concern with sort of general civility in the council context and how people are treating each other. And those are obviously very, very important concerns.

And we are prepared to continue to work with you on those issues, and we think that the councils could consider additional policies, additional training for maintaining civility in council spaces.

But that broader idea of civility is really outside the scope of these particular policies, although hopefully by moving forward with these policies it shines a light on

the general need to, you know, treat other participants in the process with respect.

So as to the policies, the next steps are that we hope that the CCC will finalize these policies here today as models, and then each council would adopt them, making any changes necessary for their unique circumstances.

I will say, I mean, again, I think these policies reflect best practices. I think there's room for adaptations based on, you know, specific council positions and administrative needs. But we would expect that, you know, by and large the policies should reflect, you know, the needs of each council.

In terms of the vehicles for adopting them, I think there's some flexibility there. You could adopt them into -- you could incorporate them into your administrative or employee handbooks. You could adopt them as standalone policies. Whatever vehicle makes sense for the individual council to employ.

The key thing is that they're accessible to all of your employees, to your participants in the process, and that they're -- they're highlighted in a way that ensures that everybody is aware of them.

And then finally, we will continue to work with the councils on implementing procedures, practical tools like checklists, email templates, etc., in our meetings with the CCC and also in our meetings with the ED subgroup. There have been a lot of questions, practical questions, about how to implement these.

And you know, we've got a six-page policy. It would be impossible to kind of have a -- have a useful policy that addresses every circumstance. But we do think that having implementing procedures would be helpful.

We've identified a number of kind of priority areas to address in those implementing procedures, and we will continue to work with you on those.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Stephanie to address the last couple of slides, and then both Stephanie and I and Sandi as needed can address questions. So I can advance the slides for Stephanie.

Ms. Hunt: Thanks, Adam.

I talked about this I think at our last closed CCC call on this issue. In conjunction with finalizing these policies, we have secured a level-setting harassment training for council staff, council members and as many process participants that we can sign up. We have a limit of 500 people that can take the training.

There's a link on your slide where you can look at the brochure that describes the training. We're going to offer two. I have three listed here, but I've since learned that really the two should cover it.

There's a supervisory course which is between one and two hours, and then there's a non-supervisory course, which is between one and two hours, and in fact can probably be accomplished in about 45 minutes, which is -- there is this other, shorter course. But it's essentially the same, so I think it's simpler to just stick with those two.

These are -- this is the training that as NOAA employees we've been required to take the last couple of years. It's quite good. We had a couple of the EDs take a look at it, and they agreed that it's valuable. It's an interactive scenario-based course online.

It covers issues of harassment prevention. It also covers prevention strategies and bystander intervention techniques. We can also add these policies to the training module so that people are required to read them and certify or attest that they have read them.

So the next steps for this is that we need a list of everyone that needs to take the training. We've -- we're planning to do that by sending each council a Google spreadsheet where you can provide the names and email addresses of the various groups that need to take it, council members, council staff.

You'll need to check whether you're a supervisor or not, and there are other labels that you'll need to associate with the participants. Because we have this portal that we can assign the training and we sort it by council, and we can update you if anybody is getting behind or, you know, needs to do some work on the training.

We hope to launch the training in early November. We have a hard deadline of March 29 for folks to take the training. We were hoping to have it for a year. The company we're using was, in the middle of this process, bought out by another company, so it is a hard deadline and we won't be able to offer the training after March 29.

The package that we purchased also has diversity and inclusion training, including managing bias and a few other topics that are pretty interesting. I've taken a look at them, they also look good. You will have access to them or we can -- we can give you access to them.

We can assign these types of trainings to folks that you would like us to. I think we're going to roll out the harassment training first and then we'll -- you can take a look at the catalog and see if any of the other trainings are interesting. And if you want your staff to take them, we can easily assign them through the portal.

So that's -- that's big picture what we're planning to do for this level-setting training. We've also heard from you that when you adopt the policies and identify your designated points of contact who need to take in allegations, they may need additional training on really how does this policy work, what do I need to do, what are the steps. And we're certainly willing to work with you on that.

I think I covered everything there. And just to summarize, you have two policies in front of you. Hoping that you'll finalize them today and then adopt them individually.

And as Adam mentioned, these policies are model policies that you should be following today. They're best practices and as you work to formally adopt them, they're good models to follow.

And we're going to continue working on implementing procedures, checklists and email templates and things like that that will be helpful, and we'll engage further with you on that.

And then we hope to get you a spreadsheet to fill out for training participants very soon, maybe as early as this

week. And hopefully launch that in early November. That's all I have.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank you, Adam, thank you, Stephanie.

Let's start with questions first before we get to adopting the policies. Dave.

Mr. Witherell: Thank you, Stephanie, just a question. Can you remind me what groups you envision taking the harassment training? And what happens if they don't take it?

Ms. Hunt: The groups we have identified are council staff, council members, and then we heard that there's great value in advisory body members taking it. We're going to hit the 500-person limit if we try to get all advisory body members.

So I forgot to mention we plan to go through a prioritization process so you can indicate if it's an AP chair, vice chair, and we'll see how many people we have and certainly prioritize those people. If there are individuals that you particularly want to prioritize, we can do that through the portal.

So the idea is as many people as possible. And we'll have to kind of go through some iterations.

And if they don't take it, we certainly don't have authority to really do anything, but clearly we'll be in contact with you and we'll have lists of who's completed it and we'll plan to work with you if you want to follow up with people.

Mr. Witherell: Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks for that. Carolyn.

Dr. Belcher: So is it helpful that state employees all have to go through both supervisor-employee training relative to sexual harassment and other things that their states deem on the top end of things, whether it's diversity? Our governor had human trafficking as one of those things that he had us really aware of.

So is it possible to help limit the number of people if you

have state reps that there's some way that they can get a dispensation or an exemption for that, rather than put them through training which is probably going to be a lot of the same information? It just seems like it would save you some spaces.

The other thing was to think about I know American Fisheries Society has come up now with their meetings that there are some directives that they're giving. It's basically an outline of what's expected for professional behavior.

Don't know that it's anything other than if people are having issues at meeting, somebody harasses them in a meeting. The question is who do they go to. So there's guidelines approach to through the fisheries that's basically put on the meeting pages or whatever. Maybe that's something that would help with general audience.

I mean, to the level, again, you're saying that there's not really a whole lot that you can do if they don't do it, but at least if the information's out there it might help with some of that.

Ms. Hunt: On the first question, I appreciate that question. We talked with our little ED subgroup, which I meant to thank Tom and Merrick and Carrie for serving as a sounding board. It was really, really helpful, especially as we kind of went into the final stages of this.

I think the feedback we got was it would be useful to assign it to state agency folks, but we do have an opportunity to exempt people. We don't know what, you know, I'm sure that the same topics are covered.

There might be value in having everybody take the same training, but if together with the EDs and you all we decide that other people are more important or we want to skip that, we can certainly do that.

On your second point, that's -- I think that's great. That's -- I've seen some of these sort of statements from other groups too that are presented at the beginning of council meetings.

I think that would be up to each council if they decide as part of adopting these policies they want to prepare a

short document to statement that is read or presented at each council meeting.

To Adam's point about civility, that's another -- it may help with that too.

Chair Luisi: Go ahead, Adam.

Mr. Issenberg: Yeah, I agree with that. I mean, I think sort of to the general point of civility and having sort of a code of conduct, I mean, I think that's a great idea. And that, you know, that serves sort of an umbrella over the civility question as well as kind of the harassment, you know, the more specific harassment point.

You raised specifically the idea of who to go to if there's a problem. And the council process participant policy does talk about that. It addresses that specifically as to how to, you know, how either a victim or someone who witnesses an incident should report that within the council system.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks. Any other questions? Bill -- oh, I'm sorry. Tom, I'll come back to you. Go ahead, Bill.

Mr. Tweit: So what happens after March 29? I'm assuming the Agency isn't just treating this as one and done, new employees, new council members, new participants in the process.

Ms. Hunt: Yeah, we talked about that a lot too. So I think it's a shared responsibility to train folks on harassment. And I think we need to continue to work together on a longer term plan. We decided to move forward with this training because we knew it was good and we could -- we had the funding this year to do it.

And I think we need to talk more about future years. We were hoping that this training would be something we would re-up. We just can't because of something that happened in the middle of the process. We have identified another training that we think might be good, so we can talk more about that.

Chair Luisi: I'm sorry, I was side-barring with Chris. Tom, was that your similar question? Go ahead, please.

Mr. Nies: Yeah, that was actually sort of similar to the

question I had, because I wonder who's paying for it after March 29. So if we're going to have more discussions, I think that'll be interesting to understand the costs and how we would deal with it going forward.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Okay, turning to -- okay, go ahead, Dale.

Mr. Diaz: Just a comment, I don't think this has been said. I heard somebody else mention this earlier, so this is not my idea.

But for new council member orientation, somebody had brought up the idea earlier that it might be good to include it for new council members. And that would kind of take care of at least that group of people.

So if that was already said, I apologize.

Chair Luisi: That's a good -- that's a good point. Adam.

Mr. Issenberg: There is actually, I think for the last couple of years, I can't remember exactly when we started, there has been -- Sandi, in fact, who's on the phone, has done a training as part of new council member training. It's more general, and I think, you know, she does a great job.

But I think there's still a lot of value to the training that, you know, NMFS has secured.

Chair Luisi: Carrie.

Dr. Simmons: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to tell the team and the Agency thank you for working on this. I know it took a lot of effort and for involving us and finding this training and getting us thinking forward on the non-participants that we maybe haven't thought about previously.

And looking forward to your continued support as we try to implement these in our handbook and SOPs. Thanks.

Chair Luisi: All right, thanks, Carrie. Okay, seeing no other hands for questions, I'd like to turn the discussion to the adoption that's being --that's being requested. If we can do that without a motion, I'd be very comfortable with that.

So let me open up the -- open up the floor for a discussion, and then I'll ask the question to the CCC. Tom.

Mr. Nies: So we all have regional differences, and some of them are, you know, administrative. I mean, who the person is going to be that's the contact. I'm not interested in that.

But I am a little curious about what if we see a need to customize the policy for our region? Do we work with Adam and Sandi, and are there things that are -- if we do work with you and Sandi, will you be at the point where you can say look, that's a change that we can't live with.

Now, presumably we're not going to make changes that conflict with the law, that would be an obvious one. But are there things in there that you say we just can't, you know, you just shouldn't do that?

Mr. Issenberg: Yes. You know, I mean, as I've said, you know, the policies basically reflect -- well, at least the staff policy basically reflects sort of best legal practices, you know.

And as you say, you know, so there's a -- there's a term in there, point of contact. And we sort of recognize you're going to have to define who the point of contact is.

And you know, there may be sort of like other administrative pieces of it where, you know, you'll say, you know, because of the way our staff structure is set up or whatever, this makes more sense. And we're certainly happy to, you know, help -- help you sort of parse those points.

You know, I think there's sort of a general structure that, you know, sort of the fundamental point of the policy is make sure there's a line for reporting incidents, make sure there's a way to investigate incidents, make sure there's a, you know, response to incidents based on what you find in your inquiry about them.

And the rest of the policies just sort of flesh that out. And you know, I think those fundamentals are fairly well established as kind of basic legal requirements.

But if you have questions, you know, as you go through it and, you know, we're happy to talk to you about those and try to help you elaborate them on them if you feel that would be necessary. I mean, I think a lot of that is what the implementing guidance will be for. But we are certainly, Sandi and I are certainly willing to follow up on that.

Chair Luisi: Go ahead, Tom.

Mr. Nies: Thanks. And just a quick follow-up. We should be working directly with you and Sandi as opposed to through our regional attorney on this issue?

Mr. Issenberg: Yes. The regional GCs are aware of this. But you know, and frankly it's really Sandi. I mean, you know, they're the employment law experts. I'm sort of trying to act as a facilitator here, but you know, we will - - we will continue to support you on this.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks for that. Anyone else? Okay, regarding the adoption of the policy, I'm going to ask the question: is there any objection to adopting the policies as presented?

All right, seeing no objection, consider the adoption of the two policies.

Was there anything else under this agenda topic that you wanted to bring up?

Mr. Issenberg: Not at all.

Chair Luisi: Okay. I see -- do a time check. All right, we're a little bit ahead of schedule. Why don't we take a break until 10:45? And is Alexa here? Yeah, if we can make sure she gets on.

Okay, all right, we'll take care of that. So let's break till 10:45, as I mentioned earlier. I need to step away until after lunch, so Wes is going to slide over into the -- into this seat and will run the rest of the meeting until lunchtime.

Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:26 a.m. and resumed at 10:53 a.m.)

Mr. Townsend: Welcome back, everyone. Break went a little long. Alexa was trying to find a parking spot. Now we're going to have a presentation on the international issues, Alexa Cole, Director of NOAA Fisheries of Office of International Affairs, Trade and Commerce. Alexa, whenever you're ready.

CCC Committee Updates

Chair Luisi: Okay, folks. We're going to kick off our last session before public comment this afternoon with CCC committee updates.

We have four presenters and so I'm going to stop in between each presenter to offer an opportunity for comments or questions. And I'm going to start with, again, Jessica Coakley is here. She is going to give us a report on the CCC Habitat Workgroup. Jessica?

CCC Habitat Workgroup

Ms. Coakley: Well, good afternoon, again. I'm here to report out for the Habitat Workgroup. I'm the current workgroup chair. I gave you a really detailed presentation at the last May CCC meeting. So we're going to keep the update today really brief. There is a handout in your meeting materials, and I'm just going to touch on some of the highlights from that.

So since the last update was provided in May 2022, the full Habitat Workgroup has met once. We met in July via webinar for two hours. And we're scheduled to meet again in November 2022.

We have a number of workgroups, subgroups that have been really active for the Habitat Workgroup. We've got a Wind Subgroup. And they've actually met seven times since February. And it includes a number of councils and some NOAA Fisheries staff from the Science Center, headquarters and the regional offices. And they've really been collaborating, coordinating and sharing information as folks on the East Coast and folks on the West Coast have been responding to wind energy development and BOEM and developing letters in terms of comments that they have been submitting to BOEM.

We also have a Fisheries Science Center Engagement subgroup that really looks for opportunities to better

connect fish habitat science with the councils and better connect our council priorities with the Fishery Science Centers.

So in November, when the full workgroup meets again, we're going to get a presentation from the Ocean Acidification Program. They are really looking for ideas and suggestions on what types of products and services could help aid the councils relative to our priorities and relative to any decision support. So we're looking forward to that conversation with the Ocean Acidification Program.

At the May meeting, we had a discussion about the potential to have an in-person meeting for the CCC Habitat Workgroup, focused on incorporating climate and climate resilience in our central fish habitat designations.

So we since formed a subgroup that we called it the In-Person Meeting Planning Subgroup. And that group met just recently on October 12. And we talked about planning for the in-person meeting but also planning for 2023, our webinar-based meetings as well.

What we would like to do as a workgroup is use those webinars, our time with the full workgroup, to really prime our discussions around climate prior to an in-person meeting and also to help with transition planning as the Gulf Council is going to be taking over. So we had Lisa Hollensead, who will be the next workgroup chair who is on the subgroup with us. So we're going to start planning for all of this and get a plan in place.

The group will, similar to what we did back in 2018 when we planned our last in-person meeting, we will have a proposal put together that talks about the goals of those webinars and our in-person meeting and any outcomes for the councils that we expect to come from those as well as, you know, details that we may work out in terms of where we may hold the meeting and how the meeting might be organized.

So we'll get that in front of you as soon as we get that proposal developed. I think that was really helpful to you back in 2017 when we planned for that 2018 meeting.

We've also been continuing our deeper dive presentations. We've received deeper dives from three councils. And then we also had a special deep dive presentation on climate vulnerability, where we had three presentations in a row on the FCVA, the HCVA and the crosswalk project that was developed.

So we're going to continue to do those into 2023. And I think the workgroup members have really found a lot of value in those for this group.

So that concludes my presentation. Really, I just wanted to hit on the highlights. If you want to look in a little more detail on what those deeper dives, what was involved in those, that's noted in the handouts. You can take a close look at that.

Chair Luisi: All right. Thanks, Jessica. Any comments or questions for Jessica? Okay. Seeing none, thank you very much for your report.

Okay. Next we're going to turn to Diana Evans. And she is going to be giving us an update on the Seventh Scientific Coordination Subcommittee meeting. So whenever you're ready, Diana.

7th Scientific Coordination Subcommittee Meeting

Ms. Evans: Good morning, members of the CCC. This is Diana Evans from the North Pacific Council. And there's my PowerPoint. Perfect.

So the council hosted -- the North Pacific Council hosted the SCS meeting in Sitka this summer. It was originally scheduled to occur in 2020. It was delayed to be able to hold it in-person due to COVID.

The effort to organize the meeting was chiefly led by our senior scientist in our office, Diana Stram, and working with an All Council Steering Committee. And the meeting was

chaired by Dr. Anne Hollowed, who was our SSC chair when started the planning. And by the time we actually had the workshop, she had retired, but graciously agreed to continue to chair the meeting, for which we were all very grateful.

The topic was Adapting Fisheries Management to a Changing Ecosystem. And the theme topics you can see listed on the slide. Oh, that's the wrong one. Here we go. There we go. The theme topics you can see listed up here.

Basically, what I'm going to walk through here is just a really high level summary of information that is also duplicated in the handout in a little bit more detail. So I'm not going to touch on all of the bullets on all of the slides. But we did want to provide this opportunity to just go over with you some of the key findings from the meeting and be able to give you a preview of some of the conversations that came out of SCS7. Diana Stram is working on the proceedings that will be available early next year.

So moving straight on to the key findings. The first one is -- the first message that the SSCs came up with for the councils is that really we need to start acting now.

Fishery management decisions are already getting more complex because of climate change. That trend is only going to increase and speed up. And so we need to start positioning ourselves now to be ready and to be prepared for those scenarios.

We spent a lot of time talking about nonstationarity. Bill mentioned that earlier in this meeting. Things are going to be less predictable. We can't rely on what has happened before, our longtime series of what has happened before to help us necessarily understand what is going to happen next.

And so how do we position ourselves to better understand that? And maybe just drawing an example from the North Pacific, for the last 20 years, my experience on the council have really focused on management measures that confer stability.

Providing a stable planning environment for the fisheries is what we've seen as a way to allow us to optimize yield and to optimize conservation objectives. Things like addressing for us the race for fish, prioritizing data collection whether that is through surveys, observers, electronic monitoring. That allows us to have a predictable understanding of trends and the status of

stocks.

And unfortunately, we're going to need to start to reset those expectations. We talked already about the snow crab crash that happened that we talked about at our last council meeting.

How do we change our management philosophy to adjust to the fact that we're not going to have that stability going forward, that same expectation and what do we need to do to calibrate our understanding of management as we go forward?

So with that, the second two findings, or the next two findings from the SCS7 meeting -- this is where I get in trouble. I need to look up there more. This is the second finding here. It focuses on the need -- how do we get to the point where we are trying to address some of those questions of complexity as we move forward?

The first one is we need to look at investment. And investment is needed both in data collection and analytical tools. We had a lot of conversation at the SCS7 meeting about how to think about new models and new analytical tools.

And the conversation was not just that we needed to talk about these large end-to-end ecosystem models, but we need to find ways to develop new models that are more nimble, that can provide targeted answers to some of our management questions. And that really involves a number of different -- investment in a whole lot of tools both at NOAA Fisheries but also at the universities that are training students to be able to develop these models and provide that kind of interdisciplinary advice that councils will need.

We also talked from a collaboration across regions that looking at data management is important to strengthen collaboration, that the idea of having more open source data will mean that we are able to reproduce the different models, different approaches across regions so that we can regionalize them without reinventing the wheel and investment is needed to make sure that the data and the source information is available to be able to allow that collaboration to occur.

And then on a parallel track for how do we get to the point where we are prepared for these more complex situations, we also need to prepare as SSCs and as the councils to transition away from our reliance on the current toolbox, particularly that based on observations, longtime series indicators and be ready to use these new tools as they are developed and to be able to look at these types of dynamic simulations.

Some of the conversations we had yesterday at this meeting, looking at the scenario planning exercise on the East Coast is a great start to that. Looking at some of the things that we're doing in the North Pacific to look at our current suite of tools and where is there flexibility built in that could be resilient to climate change, where are tools more limited? Those are opportunities that we need to investigate further.

And then the final finding from the SCS7 wrap-up session at a big picture level is to focus in on communication. The success of fishery management in the United States has largely been built on the stakeholder engagement and the trust in science-based solutions. And we need to make sure we preserve that as we move forward as we have a situation where we are increasing uncertainty, increasing risk and really need to understand those tradeoffs.

We need to make sure as we develop these new tools or develop these new approaches that we build in an opportunity for education and for our shared understanding to maintain the credibility of our process as we move into these new situations.

And as part of that process, we need to think about an inclusive process because we're going to start finding more and more that new stakeholders are coming into our fishery management process as more and more people are affected by environmental variability, and we see that reflected in how we manage our fisheries.

So recommendations for the future. And this is specifically talking to the CCC. There was lots of conversation that being in person and delaying the meeting for two years was really worthwhile because that in-person connection and the dialogue and regional collaboration is really important.

The format of using breakout sessions with rotating participation allowed all of the delegates to have a voice at the meeting, fostering those connections and hallway conversations and longer term relationships.

Another theme that came out of sort of thinking about how the structure or the process of the workshop happens is that we asked our vice chair, Bill Tweit, to come to the meeting. The SCS found that really valuable. It really helped set the tone. So he gave opening remarks and closing remarks.

And it helped set the tone that this isn't just another scientific conference. This is really a meeting of the SSCs and to be able to provide advice directly for councils as managers.

And that dialogue between what you need as council members and what your SSCs provide you, the more opportunities we find for that dialogue the better the product that you're going to get and fine developed.

So one recommendation is to continue that idea of council member participation in the SCS meetings in the future whether, you know, ideally through perhaps more council member participation or also may them having a CCC member on the steering committee for the next SCS7. Just some way to really make sure that the information and the dialogue that is happening in the SSC context is one that is what you are looking for as fishery managers.

The group recommended continuing with that two year timing. It was unfortunate that we went with the four year gap. But the two year timing makes sense. But the SSCs are looking for more frequent opportunities to communicate across regions.

Some ideas that came out of the meeting, perhaps in looking for some CCC concurrence with investigating opportunities, more virtual opportunities for the SSC to get together. Perhaps SSC leadership having some kind of informal workgroup, periodic teleconferences, maybe even setting up a virtual meeting in the off year, an informational meeting, just to keep the ideas current or to identify where there is new information coming forward on a timely basis.

And then just one other thing for the CCC to consider. You don't yet -- the group did not come up with a specific recommendation yet on the topic for the next SCS meeting but suggested generally that it follow-up from the information that came out of this one.

I know in her concluding remarks, one of the things that Dr. Hollowed said was that she -- at this stage, a lot of the ecosystem models that were presented in the keynotes and the case studies were yet to be used directly in fishery management advice. And it was certainly her hope that by the time we held this meeting again in two years that that would be different. We would be able to have site examples of where those models really are influencing management advice directly.

So no specific recommendation yet. We also do not have a post-council yet who has volunteered to host the next SCS workshop. I don't know that that's a decision we necessarily need to make at this meeting but certainly probably by next May in order to be able to plan that on that time frame. That's something that we would be looking for.

And then just finally, all of the meeting materials are available, the presentations are available online. You can access them through the links both in the handout and in the presentation.

We also do have recordings of the case studies and the keynote speakers, of everything except the breakout sessions if you are interested in accessing that before the development of the proceedings.

As I said, Diana Stram is working on that proceedings. And assuming that that piques your interest, she would intend to present that to you in full at the May CCC meeting.

It was a great meeting. I think a lot of really good ideas. Hopefully, you received positive reports back from your SSC delegates. I think that people really appreciated the opportunity to get together and talk about these ideas moving forward. Thank you.

Chair Luisi: Thank you, Diana. Does anyone have any

comments or questions regarding her report? Tom?

Mr. Nies: So, I guess I got a question about this idea of having SSC leadership meet over the course of the year. I'm just curious. I know I've asked this question in the past. How many SSC chairs and vice chairs come from the social sciences?

Ms. Evans: Through the chair, I have no idea for other councils. I know from our SSC, neither of them do, but I don't know that information for other councils.

Mr. Nies: So, through the chair, it's the same with our SSC and, you know, when I asked this question a few years ago, more than a few years ago, that was the case around all of the councils. I don't know if that's still true.

So, I guess if we're going to talk about SSC leadership meetings, we need to make sure that all disciplines are represented.

And I'm not suggesting that, you know, we force there to be a social scientist as a chair or vice chair, but if you're going to have periodic meetings, I think it's important to include the economic and social scientists involved in that process too. Just a thought.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Tom. Anyone else? Chris?

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Diana, for the presentation. It sounded like it was a great meeting. Certainly talking to Brandon, he said it went very well. Remind me, is there an SCS working group, steering committee? I forgot. I can't remember. Is there -- that exists like all the time?

Ms. Evans: Through the chair, I'm going to look to David. I know there is an SCS working group formed right now. That's a permanent working group, David?

Mr. Witherell: Yes, as far as I understand, it's a standing subcommittee or workgroup of this CCC meeting where we have the chairs and vice chairs of all of the council SSCs that are part of that.

Dr. Moore: So, to follow on, is there a steering committee that's responsible for setting up the meetings that's separate than that group or is that the same

group? Same group?

Mr. Witherell: Yes.

Dr. Moore: Okay, thanks.

Mr. Witherell: Yeah, they talk about what subjects will be assigned. They make recommendations on where, and when, and the topics, and then the CCC approves that.

Dr. Moore: Thanks. Yeah, thank you.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thank you. Bill?

Mr. Tweit: Thanks. I think I raised this already. We've talked about it a little bit in hallways too, but I think that concept of having Dr. Strand or maybe even Dr. Holloway who convened to join us at the next CCC meeting for a deeper dive into this, to take up some more of the agenda time is something we should certainly keep there as a potential valuable agenda item for the next meeting.

I also think just in general, it's worth giving the SCS some positive feedback on their recommendations as well. After I got to watch them work, their recommendations made a lot of sense to me.

Chair Luisi: Yeah, thanks, Bill. Okay, seeing no other hands at this time, Diana, thank you very much for your presentation, and next I'm going to turn things over to Mary Sabo with the Mid-Atlantic Council staff. Mary is going to give us an update on the CCC communications workgroup.

CCC Communications Workgroup - Presentation on
Cross-Council Meeting Calendar, and In-Person Meeting
Proposal

Ms. Sabo: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to give this update today on communications group activities. Let's see. There we go, okay.

So, the communications group was established in 2012 and it consists of the outreach or public affairs specialists from each council. Before I jump in, I just

want to acknowledge what a great group it is to work with.

I really appreciate the insight and expertise that they all bring to the table, and the opportunity to learn from the different challenges that are faced in different regions and kind of different innovations that they're all rolling out.

So, today I have three topics to update you on. The first two are really the big ones, the cross-council meeting calendar. This is following up on the presentation that I gave in May, and second is an in-person meeting proposal, and then the last one is kind of a minor thing, just an update on the council flyer that we first developed a few years ago and recently updated.

Okay, so the joint council meeting calendar, that is something that was originally proposed by the CCC a year ago at the October meeting.

The directive to the communications group was to come up with some way to display all council meetings in a shared calendar that can be used by councils and NMFS and the public if they're interested to see when all of the meetings are at a glance.

So, the communications group kind of initially decided that our requirements for it were that it be easy to update and navigate, accessible from our shared council website ideally, and that each of the members can update their own meetings so that no one is responsible for the whole calendar.

And then the meetings that we wanted to include were council meetings, SSC meetings, and then joint regional council meetings like CCC, CMOD, SCS.

Okay, so the calendar is now live on the council website, but we haven't linked it from the main navigation menu yet because we are bringing it today for approval or comments from the CCC.

Our group reviewed a few calendar platforms and ultimately decided to use one called Knack, which the Mid-Atlantic Council already uses, so there's no additional subscription costs.

Basically, I made the framework and then all of the communications group members created user accounts and put their meetings in. And I think even the least tech savvy of us has said that it's a pretty simple and painless process, so that's, I would say, a success in that department.

There's a link to the calendar on the meeting page if anybody wants to go poke around while I give the presentation. I'm just going to give a few, kind of run through a few features of the calendar on the next few slides.

Okay, so when you get to the page, the first view that you see at the top is the calendar view. By default, it displays all meetings, but if you want to view only council meetings or only SSC meetings, you can click the tabs at the top left to filter them. You can also change the view to month, week, or day.

It's kind of hard to see on the screen here, but there's a button that says download events, and this is kind of a neat feature. You can actually import the calendar into your Google calendar or Outlook calendar and it will sync the next six months of meetings into your calendar.

And then you can click on any of the meetings to view additional details, so that's what it looks like when you open up the little pop-up to see more details about it.

So, our group kind of decided that we wanted to keep the information on here minimal, kind of date focused, so we're trying to encourage people to visit the council meeting pages for more information.

So, all of these pop-ups should have a link to either a meeting page or the council website where people can learn more. The idea with this is to make it as painless for the communications group members so that we don't have to go back and update meeting times if we change from a 9:00 a.m. to a 10:00 a.m. start or that sort of thing.

And then below the calendar, there is a list view, and it's the same meetings, just a different way of looking at them. There's a button at the top of it where you can filter meetings, so if you only wanted to look at Mid-

Atlantic Council meetings, you could do that, or you could also filter it to see meetings within a specific timeline, time range.

All right, a few final notes on this topic, as I mentioned already, we're planning to only use dates only, no start or end times, and then city and state only, not listing the specific hotel or address.

And again, this is to make it so that we don't constantly have to go back to make up dates to the calendar.

We're planning to include links to council meeting pages, so pushing people to individual council sites for details. And then group members will be responsible for their own meetings.

So, whoever is the chair of the communications group, which rotates with the CCC chair, they will sort of be responsible for monitoring and sending update, or sending reminders to the group.

So, that's kind of it on the calendar, but I wanted to, if it's okay, pause, and since I'm moving onto a completely different topic after this, I thought I would just pause and see if there are any questions or feedback on the calendar.

Chair Luisi: All right, thanks, Mary. I think it looks great. I appreciate the work that was put into doing that. I know calendars are the only thing keeping us all sane. You know, at some point in your life, you have so many different calendars on your Gmail account that it's, it can get unwieldy, but thank you, Mary.

Does anyone have any comments regarding what Mary presented? Okay, go ahead and move on, Mary. Oh, I'm sorry, Eric has a question.

Mr. Reid: Do we have to say we approve of this before we move on?

Chair Luisi: Well, since nobody said anything about it, I assume we approve it. I can -- we'll just put it on the record though. Is there any objection to approving the calendar as displayed before us? Okay, thanks, Eric. Go ahead, Mary.

Ms. Sabo: All right, thank you. Okay, so the next topic is a possible communications group meeting in person in 2023. This came up also at the May meeting and the group was directed to develop a meeting proposal for consideration by the CCC at this meeting.

I'm sorry. There we go. So, our group, like I said, was formed in 2012, and we have met twice in person, once in 2016 in Hawaii and once in 2018 in Sitka, Alaska.

I think our group members all would agree that the meetings provide a valuable forum to learn from each other, discuss common issues, and develop public affairs strategies on issues of importance to the CCC.

So, earlier this year, we met and kind of brainstormed a list of topics, things that we would like to discuss or learn about at a potential in-person meeting.

So, you have a meeting proposal in the meeting materials. I'm just going to do sort of a high-level overview of the eight broad topics that we've identified.

I think most of us would agree that it's a little bit more than we could cover in a two to three-day agenda, which is what we're planning for, so it's possible that some of these might get cut or reduced in scope.

And if the CCC would like to provide any input today on topics that are high priority or that you would like us not to consider, then we would welcome that feedback.

So, the first topic is a big one. We always spend -- or at our two past in-person meetings, we spent a good chunk of time just kind of discussing the communication tools, technologies, and approaches that each council is using.

In the past, we have done a pre-meeting survey and collected responses from each council about how we are doing things, what website platforms we use, how we're doing emails, and newsletters, and press releases, and it's a long list.

And then usually we include a few presentations on topics of interest or innovative things that different councils are doing. I know that I think three or four councils have redesigned their websites recently, so I personally would be interested to hear about kind of

lessons learned from that.

And then I know the Pacific and North Pacific have rolled out new comment portals, so I think several members of our group expressed interest in learning more about those.

So, that kind of thing I have found very educational at our past meetings, and since it will have been five years since we last met in person, I think that would be beneficial.

The next topic of interest relates to engaging the public on complex management actions and this is sort of -- the idea is looking at how the councils are developing messages using different types of communication products to help members of the public understand and comment effectively on complex management actions.

That's something that came up in the Mid recently when we were working on a couple of allocation amendments that had some sets of alternatives that were a little bit challenging to describe, challenging to help the public understand, and so I think our group was interested in looking at a few regional examples and potentially developing some best practices.

There was also a proposal to discuss advisory panel issues. Some councils are having trouble recruiting and maintaining engagement with advisory panel members, so how are we dealing with that or have any councils come up with any strategies for keeping members engaged, that sort of thing.

Another suggestion related to communication and media guidelines are training for either staff, council members, or AP members, and this includes both development of policies and actually providing training to members on how to engage the media or other communication topics.

All right, topic number five kind of relates to what came up during the area-based management discussion earlier. The idea with this one would be to kind of do a deep dive on the regional council website, look at the content that's on there, identify ways we can improve it, and then maybe identify some additional pages that we

could develop as a group that would highlight CCC work, potentially workgroups, workgroup products and that sort of thing.

Chair Luisi: Hey, Mary, could you advance your slide?

Ms. Sabo: Oh, yes, absolutely. Thank you. The next topic relates to communicating council successes and challenges. So, this could kind of be combined with the last one, but some of you may remember that a couple of years ago, there was an effort to develop fact sheets on a few topics that were being, that were a focal point of MSA reauthorization. I think those were forage, climate change, and timeline for council action development. So, this kind of takes that concept and potentially expands upon it.

I think there are probably ways that we could leverage our collective platform as a CCC to, or as, you know, a joint council body to promote the council efforts, and accomplishments, and issues like climate change, forage, you know, things that kind of extend beyond just managing fisheries, but how are the councils innovating with ecosystem-based management? How are we addressing climate change, anything like that? There are potentially opportunities to develop some joint messaging.

This seventh topic, next to last, relates to EEJ. There were a number of outreach recommendations included in the report, and so our group could take a look at that and develop some recommendations for the CCC to consider regarding how we can address those outreach-related recommendations.

And then finally, kind of a broad one, improving two-way communication with management partners. There were suggestions from group members for this to include communication and coordination with NMFS or how we coordinate with our interstate management partners, state partners, and then also potentially groups like Sea Grant.

So, that is it for the in-person meeting proposal. There are some more details on each of these topics in the meeting materials. Since this last one is short, I'll just kind of blast through it.

Some of you may remember we created a regional council flyer back in 2017. It's been updated a couple of times and then we recently updated it with new -- the back side includes some quick facts from the fisheries' economics of the United States and a couple of other NMFS reports, and so I just wanted to note that an updated version of that is available on the regional council site.

I know several councils bring those to their council meetings and put them out for the public to take, so yeah, I just wanted to let everyone know that that new version is available. And with that, I will wrap it up and I think 15 minutes until the Phillies' game, so right on time.

Chair Luisi: You did a great job as always, Mary. I think what might be helpful is if you go back to your slide one of two and, you know, the specific feedback from the CCC at this point.

Let's just take each page one at a time to see if anyone has any initial thoughts about what might need to be a priority or what could come off the list. I'll look around the table to see if anyone has any thoughts on that. Carrie?

Dr. Simmons: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I think for us, the number two would definitely be a priority, and I think both some maybe back and forth that we miscommunicated.

Also, we wanted to add something about increasing participation in public hearings. I don't know if that would fall under number three or a different section, but we'd also like to see that as well across councils. Thanks.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Carrie. Chris?

Dr. Moore: Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mary. So, I like one through three and five. So, I don't know how many priorities we want to talk about today or how many of these would fill up two or three days of meetings, but certainly the first one, second one, the third one like Carrie said.

I think that there's been some issues there that I'd like,

you know, the group to explore, and number five on the other page, I think, would be -- wait, not five, six, I'm sorry, six. It's one, two, three, and six.

Chair Luisi: Okay, Chris. Thanks for that feedback. Bill?

Mr. Tweit: One of the -- just to pile on, a little bit on Chris's, one of the areas that we really think as a council we have some of our biggest challenges with is number six, and so we want to definitely put a star next to that one, not to diss any of the others, but.

Chair Luisi: Yeah, thanks, Bill. Any other thoughts? There's a suggestion to include one, two, three, and six as the top priorities and perhaps the --

So, Mary, if that comes out of this committee meeting today, would your group discuss whether or not there could be additional items added or would you remove the other?

If those become priorities, would you start there and start planning the meeting, and then fill in wherever you can if there's extra time? Is that how it would work?

Ms. Sabo: I think, yeah, I think that would be the goal, would be to, you know, try to build an agenda around those priorities that have been identified, and then if there is time, you know, time left over or ways that we can address any of the other items, then we could do that.

But I guess I should also just note that it's my expectation that any agenda would be circulated at least to the executive directors for review and approval before it's finalized, so you all would have another crack at commenting on that.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Mary. I'll go to Kitty and then I'll come back to Chris. Go ahead, Kitty.

Ms. Simonds: So, yeah, that's all great. Actually, I like them all, but for the last one, number eight, the way we can really deal with that is to resume our monthly meetings that we used to have, which I always liked because I got a lot of work done that way.

And I think that, I mean, I think that we should resume

them. I'm not sure -- we need to have a discussion. What do you all think about that? But that's one way of dealing with number eight, which obviously was important to the communications group and I like that.

I liked when we did that because it was an hour, right, and we got to talk about issues that we had and so did NMFS, and we found out a lot of things from NMFS, you know, in this informal way, so that's my suggestion.

Chair Luisi: Thanks, Kitty. I'll come back to Chris and then I'll go to you, Carrie.

Dr. Moore: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to go back to Mary's first question on this topic which relates to whether or not we, the CCC, support an in-person meeting in 2023. So, I, for one, do, and certainly I'd like to hear what other folks think, so that would be a question.

Chair Luisi: Yes, so we'll make sure we can address that and I just might as well open up the floor for those two questions at this point. Carrie, do you still have a comment or question?

Dr. Simmons: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I would be in support of an in-person meeting. I guess one of my questions is, as the host council, are we responsible for hosting this meeting as well if it's to feed into the May CCC meeting?

And if we are, that's okay. I just need to know that now, and can we decide what location, and generally what dates we're looking at, and what is the plan for that, please, Mary? Thanks.

Chair Luisi: Go ahead, Mary.

Ms. Sabo: Okay, when our group first talked about it, there was an interest in planning the meeting in conjunction with the May CCC meeting. After that discussion, there were some concerns raised about both the venue capacity and then also staff logistics.

So, the staff that would be involved in planning this meeting would also be involved in the CCC meeting. And having just done the CCC meeting in May, I'm very sympathetic to that, and we definitely want to have

Emily's full attention.

Emily had suggested potentially trying to plan a meeting at a different time in the Tampa area. So, we don't have a date. We don't have a target date yet, but we do have a new calendar that we can use to help us schedule it. So, that is obviously dependent on support from you, Carrie, for -- the chairmanship of the committee generally does rotate with the host CCC council, so I think that's my answer, that the target would be not in conjunction with the CCC meeting, but probably most likely in the Gulf region.

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Mary. And it's not necessary to be in the same region that's the host CCC council, but it makes sense. It will just add a little more work to Carrie's planning.

Okay, any other comments? I think we got some good feedback as far as priorities. We also had some good feedback, and based on some of the discussion that we had, I think it was this morning, right, we talked about all of the in-person hybrid style stuff.

I think there was a general understanding that, you know, in person, you know, adds a lot of positive benefits to those meetings or all of our meetings that we have, so I certainly support it. Eric?

Mr. Reid: Yeah, I just wouldn't recommend Tampa, Florida in the fall or Ithaca, New York in the dead of winter. That's where Janice Plant is from, so Janice, you can go to Florida.

Chair Luisi: Or Dewey Beach in the fall after what I went through last week in flood waters up to my waist. Okay, I think we're good on that. Mary, thank you so much for your presentation, appreciate it.

All right, we're going to move onto our last item on the agenda today before public comment. We have Greg Stunz going to present on the Committee on Fisheries, the summary report.

Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Summary Report

Dr. Stunz: All right, that would be me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Okay, I see you got the slides up there. So, I

was the CCC representative for the recent meeting. Of course, this is the United Nations and the FAO's Committee on Fisheries.

And so, just to, let's see here, bring everyone up to speed real quick, well, maybe it's not -- okay, there we go, all right. So, just to bring everyone up to speed just a little bit, this group meets every two years.

It rotates among the councils and we'll talk about that in a little bit. Maybe I'll just pose some questions about, you know, how to get the best participation and the most out of this meeting that we can as it relates to all of our councils, but this was the 35th session.

This isn't so much of a presentation as just some informative slides. If you're interested in more, there's the report that's included in our meeting materials, and so I just pulled out a few takeaways that I thought would be of interest to many of our councils.

There might be other stuff that others are interested in that I didn't pull out as far as highlights from the meetings, so of course feel free to look into that.

And so, the goal there, of course, is this group, a collection of nations that are primarily the main players in the fisheries' arena, work together to develop binding and non-binding documents that promote resource sustainability in fisheries.

And I should point out that fisheries are kind of broadly defined as well to include aquaculture, but also it's led very much into biodiversity and conservation issues as well beyond just sort of straight up fisheries' management.

So, I've put together a few of the key takeaways that were there as we worked this that were related, and I'm certainly not going to read all of this, but this kind of directs you on some of what were the main items.

First was, you know, just kind of reaffirmation of this group as, you know, working for the good of the world kind of thing, and providing a food supply and that sort of thing, and so that was just sort of a kickoff initiative or one of the main goals of the outcome of the meeting.

And that's summarized much more, but getting down into the weeds of, you know, what we talked about and what's relevant to our councils, and of course, this has been a theme of this meeting here, a few of these.

And one -- well, it's not quite -- there we go, yeah. One is IUU fishing and combating that. That's a big problem globally obviously. I don't know if any of our councils don't have an issue with this in one way or the other.

And so, largely this group, as you might imagine, with all of the input that is taken, and I'll talk a little more about that in a second, you know, sometimes it's hard to, other than broad statements really, accomplish a whole lot in terms of specific needs given all of the diversity.

But the whole idea was to increase awareness of this and increase cooperation among all of the nations to begin to curb this activity, and of course this happens on a variety of fisheries that are a concern for us.

Related to that, there's really a couple of subcommittees that are part of this group, but the outcome of this meeting was to form one more and that was the Committee on Fisheries Management.

Because of what I mentioned earlier, there wasn't a lot of time to really get into any type of in-depth discussions or dialogue regarding fisheries management, so the one outcome was to establish this Subcommittee on Fisheries Management.

The charge of that committee and what their real goals and missions are is summarized in the statements that I've provided in your document, but that should be a positive change to move the ball a little bit more with some more in-depth discussions.

Another big one that we keep hearing about around this table as well is addressing climate change. With this group, climate change is a big deal, but also it's particularly important to smaller island countries where there might be greater impacts for a variety of reasons given that geography.

So, a lot of time was spent talking about impact of climate change, both on fisheries directly, but

aquaculture as well. And -- well, I don't -- I'll see if I can get -- this thing is kind of headed back.

Anyway, the other component of this was to really begin to incorporate conservation and biodiversity into the fisheries' network outside of just sort of looking at straight up fisheries and management issues.

So, there was a lot of discussions about how to preserve and protect biodiversity and what does that mean for sustainable fisheries. And, of course, there's a lot more to that that we all know, but I don't want to -- I was just asked to give a very short update of what's going on as it relates to this group.

And so, if you want to know more, that's the FAO's website. Right up front is the Committee on Fisheries since it recently just met, and all of the documents, all of the different positions coming from the different groups are there that you can read.

And I guess a few just sort of things that I would highlight that would be of relevance to this group is future meetings come up. So, we've got, you know, a couple of years until the next meeting. It was the Gulf's turn to represent. Next time, it will be another one.

That's a little bit part of the challenge is that, you know, there's a new person like me coming in. If you hadn't done this, it's quite the learning curve to understand their meeting and that sort of thing.

We have a U.S. delegation very similar to ICCAT for those of you that have participated in that. A consensus is formed among the different groups that make up that committee led by the Department of State.

Of course, many of you know Deidre Williams and she does a good job representing and presenting that consensus statement and just, you know, representing all of us in general.

But we probably could have more input into that process, and so that's kind of some things as I look in my notes is that, you know, if we want to have that more meaningful participation or if there's particular topics of your council that you would like to bring forward, you know, I think that could be something we

might want to either discuss today or begin to develop the plans.

And Mr. Chairman, that really is the highlights from that and I'll be happy to answer any questions or address some of those topics that I just brought up.

Chair Luisi: Yeah, thanks a lot, Greg, and thanks for your willingness to serve the CCC at that meeting. I know with travel, it can be challenging, you know, but Rome's not too bad of a place to go for a few days.

Dr. Stunz: Well, I would add, Mr. Chairman, it was virtual.

Chair Luisi: Oh, geez.

Dr. Stunz: So, it was an early wake up call. At first, when you said Rome, it got my attention until I realized one of the challenges with COVID, there was limited space and things, and so there was a smaller subgroup that attended in person, and so I tuned in very early in the morning each day.

Chair Luisi: Okay, does anyone have any suggestions, any thoughts, questions, discussion for Greg? Bill?

Mr. Tweit: Question first. At the prior COFI, there was a lot of discussion about the FAO holding the Year of Artisanal Fisheries and really putting a spotlight on artisanal fisheries, both their value but also the management challenges that they pose. Did anything ever come of that? I mean, then came the pandemic, then came all kinds of things.

Dr. Stunz: Yes, Bill, and the details of that are included in the report. There was about 12, I guess you would call them action items, that this group addressed during the meeting. I just pulled out a few highlights. That was one of them and it's summarized pretty well in the document if you want to take a look at that.

Mr. Tweit: Did you see much of value for U.S. councils in that or was it really focused on artisanal fisheries mostly third world level?

Dr. Stunz: No, I believe there's some value for us here as well for any of those that deal with those types of

fisheries, so, yeah, I'd encourage folks that are interested in that to look in the report and you can get a summary of what was discussed and the plans for the future for that.

Mr. Tweit: Great, thanks. I just want to, while I've got the mic, just echo your thoughts about putting some more, the CCC putting some more effort into the transition, so whoever ends up representing us two years from now has the ability to draw on past experience to maybe hit the ground running a little bit better.

Dr. Stunz: Yeah, maybe talk to the person immediately following them to sort of get the lay of the land if they hadn't done that.

I would also recommend, Mr. Chairman, maybe there is some dialogue that occurs with the Department of State or others maybe very early on in the process as those sort of, the delegation meetings are occurring.

I mean, I was involved in the delegation meetings, but it was right before. I got the impression maybe there were discussions going on before that. That would allow us to inform sort of what's going to happen.

This committee could be informed, and then if there's relevant things to bring forward to get on that list, you know, that's probably the way to go about that, and so that -- I mean, not like it didn't work or anything, but, you know, there's way to be more involved should this committee want to do that.

Public Comment

Chair Luisi: Okay, thanks, Greg. Anyone else? The good thing is we have a couple of years to try to figure that out, so. Okay, I don't see any other hands, so I think we're going to wrap that item on our agenda up and turn to the public comment period. Is there anyone in the audience? Okay, we do have someone in the audience that wants to provide comment.

Ms. Moore: Hi, my name is Meredith Moore. I'm the Director of the Fish Program at Ocean Conservancy. With your permission, I'm going to stay seated because I have a bum knee, so I'm just going to sit here if that's

all right, and I'll be brief because I know there's a game coming, so appreciate that.

I've been coming to CCC meetings for a long time. This is the first time I've given public comment. I think I've been doing this for like seven or more years, so, hi, I'm the one that lurks in the back of the room. Very nice to talk to you all.

I want to start first by saying that I really do appreciate like very sincerely the work that the councils and that the agency do, and that is really meaningful and important work.

And I think you mostly only hear from me when I'm asking for you to do more stuff and I'm going to do that in a second, but mostly I did want to start by saying thank you.

And I also really want to acknowledge that there are serious budget constraints that you're all under and I take that really seriously, and I think it's really fair to say that the ambition of the agency and the councils is very constrained by budget.

And that's a real problem and I just want you to know that we really see that, and appreciate that, and are keeping that in mind in all of our work to try to support the work that you all do.

I want to just spend just a couple of minutes sharing my thoughts on climate change because it seemed like everyone else was having fun talking about climate change, so I wanted to as well.

So, if you look at the climate models, I'm going to take a big step back and look at what the climate models look like. Really no matter which emission scenarios that you look at as far as reductions, none of them diverge until about 2050.

So, that means that we've got 30 years of kind of baked in, increasing climate impacts in our oceans that will just continue to get worse over the next 30 years and I just wanted to make some comments about that generally.

Even just this year, we've seen major storms, crashes in biomass, concerns about the challenge of recovering

overfished species and what that looks like.

And I just think about the fact that we've got sort of 30 years of thermal inertia that we're facing that are going to make the work that you all do harder and harder, and put our fishing communities really at the front lines of a lot of those major changes over the next many decades.

So, I would ask that just briefly, like if you reflect on the stocks you manage and the fishing communities that are in your regions, and think about how many of them are already experiencing climate impacts and are vulnerable to the ones that are to come.

And then I would emphasize that the GAO study that was mentioned yesterday on climate and fisheries found that only a quarter of our FMPs include any climate information.

So, there's been a lot of really, really good conversation today about a lot of science tools and I really applaud the focus and urgency that I've heard from you all.

I'm excited about the many things on the horizon like the next steps out of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's scenario planning process, the conclusion of the East Coast scenario planning process which is really impressive, the North Pacific Task Force. I was happy to hear about that.

I learned a lot about the Northeast Regional Marine Fisheries habitat assessment today. That was very cool. There's the national SSC meeting, and also I hope to see a very well-funded CEFI for the IRA fund soon. I think that would be really, really critical.

But the key indicator for me or one of the key indicators is that we are not adding it into management very well. There seems to be a stumbling block between the science to management interface and you all are like at the forefront of that stumbling block, so that's why I wanted to talk a little bit to you today.

I don't really see a lot of near-term management actions that are happening that sort of are focusing on, and preparing, and building resilience in stocks and communities for those 30 years or more of storms, and heat waves, and declining productivity, and the other

impacts that you know are already happening.

So, I just wanted to highlight again that the GAO offered some really, I think, important recommendations to NOAA fisheries to work more with the councils to find, and identify, and prioritize those opportunities to enhance the climate resilience of federal fisheries.

And I really hope that's a platform to build a robust set of approaches that really enfold climate resilience into every part of the work you do, into surveys, into assessments, and into those on-the-water management decisions.

There's a really huge need to think very creatively about what we can do to preserve the long-term capacity of fish populations to support sustainable fishing.

And I think we need to embrace that we're not going to have all of the science. We're not going to have -- it's not all going to feed into a stock assessment and come out the other side with an ACL that we can just point to and say we did it. That's the climate ACL.

It's going to be trickier than that and we're going to have to start making decisions again about resilience early on so that we can actually get out the other side of those 30 years with the same sort of like fishing communities, and healthy ecosystems, and fish populations that we so value.

So, I would just say I hope to see climate change really considered. It's been so embedded in the work that you've all been doing here today and I would really love to see that carried through to the council meetings and to your fishery management decisions to consider climate change every time you sit down at a table to think about what you're going to do next for a stock, to think about whether climate change has been part of your thinking going into that.

Because I think that's the way that we start trying to make sure that we're going to get through the next 30, 40, 50 years with actual sustainable fishing for feeding people, for supporting cultures, for recreation, for all of that.

So, thanks so much. I really appreciate the opportunity

to speak to you all. I know I'm not making a small ask. I recognize that. I really appreciate the urgency that you've all brought to it today. I'm looking forward to supporting you in doing that work, so thank you very much.

Chair Luisi: Thank you very much for your comments. Is there anyone else from the audience? There is a webinar? Okay. So, Manny, you're up if you can hear us. We can't hear you.

Mr. Duenas: Hello?

Chair Luisi: There you go. We can hear you now.

Mr. Duenas: Okay, yeah, I'm not speaking as a council member. I'm speaking as a representative of my fishing community here on Guam. I've been the President of the Guam Fisherman's Cooperative, a small, artisanal organization, for the last 20 years, and we have been in existence for 50 years.

I just want to speak on a few items. You know, I've traveled through the states. I've been to CCC meetings and other meetings, and I keep hearing the word fishing industry, which to me puts a sour taste in my mouth because I've met your fishermen and to me, they're part of a fishing community, even the guys that are being shut down in Alaska. They're part of a fishing community. They've put their families and their livelihood on the table.

So, as far as I'm concerned, if you really want to see in the industry, come up to the Pacific and see the foreign vessels that are traversing our region, and we're protecting our ocean and all they're doing is benefitting from the donut that they surround our protected areas while our U.S. fishermen can't enter those regions.

The second thing I'd like to mention is the application of the use of commercial fisheries in the data collection on the local population, the small guys.

You know, when you want to collect data, you have to do it with the communities that are out there, the small fishermen. I bet you it would make more or touch more fish than the guys on the big boats, but at the end of the day, you need to work with us on the small, the 20-

footers, the 25-footers.

I mean, I watch shows from the Wicked Tuna to the Swamp People. I see those guys are operating very hard and very -- you know, they're tough individuals, but at the end of the day, they aren't part of the small scale.

And, you know, I hate to say it, but I have to watch Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives to understand your fisheries in the states where you get a guy with a mahi-mahi from a small fishing boat.

So, you need to address these issues pertaining to these little guys and you need to collaborate with the Fish and Wildlife Service through the Sportsfish Restoration Fund to provide some assistance to the little commercial guys because they're disallowed from participating in a program despite the fact they're being taxed for the same equipment of recreational fishermen.

I understand the line of demarcation between the two entities, but we need to collaborate in order to protect ourselves and to perpetuate an existence that we need.

We've been fishing in the Marianas for 4,000 years. We are a people of longevity. And every time I hear people talk about climate change and all of that, we live with it. I am 65 years old.

I've been through Category 5 typhoons. I think that's the highest level, you know, where it's over 220 miles an hour, just devastating my highland. I've been through about a dozen of them in my last 65 years, so I know about climate change.

And I'm going to tell you, the people in the Pacific, especially in the fisheries, we knew about climate change 30, 40 years ago. We came up with the theory of El Nino and El Nina.

Before everything became a-marching, you know, movement to say climate change, climate change, we knew that the fish would move from the eastern to the western and the western to the eastern.

So, you know, it's not a new phenomenon for us and we've been dealing with it, but our small island communities, we're being inundated with annual catch

limits and all of these federal regulations that are normally applied to large-scale fisheries and that disenfranchise small fishing communities suffering the tone of that march.

And we're working on developing a commercially, I mean a locally-based data collection program with our smaller scale fishermen, but like Kitty said earlier, we're short \$200,000.

We just can't drive from LA to San Diego. We have to take a plane and it costs a lot of money just for the bare fact that from Guam to Hawaii is over \$2,000 when you guys can fly from Hawaii to Houston for \$800.

You know, we're getting ripped off out here and everybody is so greedy. Islanders are costing too much. No, we're trying to participate in the American strategy of protecting our resource.

But you need to be all-inclusive with our small-scale fishermen because every decision they make in Washington, as draconian, my favorite word, as it can be, or the butterfly effect as all of your multiple programs, this council, the CCC has to get itself directly involved in these actions.

And so, I just want to say that, in closing, recognize the value of our small communities and recognize that -- you know, I always complain. You know, can you give our small-scale a t-shirt, a baseball cap, or something to show appreciation?

Because how many of the people in Washington and the science center, how much money are they making based on our poor data collection? So, I'm just asking, can you just reward us or something instead of punishing us over time?

I represented 300 fisherman and I'm down to 100, so it's really sad that our fishing communities are really impacted by the, like I said, draconian regulations without consultation.

And like I said in December, we had an account with scheduling for a council meeting on Guam and I wanted the council to meet with the community, not with more scientists. You guys have too many meetings. You need

to talk to your people. You need to come down to our level.

Don't talk down to us. Maybe the rule should be talk up to us so we can look down on you and figure out what the solution is because we don't want to stop what we have been doing for 4,000 years.

But it seems like everything is blamed on us, climate change, EFH. Like I said, EFH is something we've dealt with because if it's not an herbivore eating our leaf, it's a carnivore, and then when there's more herbivores, the carnivores are happy.

You know, we depend on our fisheries to feed our island, and out of 3,500 years, we fed ourselves. We didn't have pigs, cows, or chickens on this island. We fed ourselves with the ocean.

They took our turtles away. They're telling us we cannot eat the sharks anymore. Everything is taken away. We don't have bycatch in the Marianas. We eat everything so long as it sustains our people.

When the Spanish came to Guam, they looked at us and said, hey, they were robust people, meaning we were fat, and we're still fat, but we're fat on corned beef and Spam, not eating our fish.

So, you know, it's a detriment to our lifestyle and it's a detriment to the perpetuation of our people and our culture. That's why I've always said, wow, EEJ is a great thing, but, no, it's not even a priority for anybody, if that's still good.

I apologize if I've taken up your time, but you guys are doing a fantastic job and I'm really proud of you as a former chairman of the CCC. Thank you very much.

Adjourn

Chair Luisi: Thank you very much, Manny. Let me look back and see if there is anybody else on the webinar? No, okay, with no other public comments before us, that concludes our business for today. We will take a recess until 9:00 tomorrow morning. Enjoy your evenings. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 4:47 p.m.)