COUNCIL COORDINATION COMMITTEE MEETING

(Via Webex)

Silver Spring, Maryland

Tuesday, May 27, 2020
PARTICIPANTS:

Attendees:

DIANA MARTINO  
Caribbean

GRACIELA GARCIA-MOLINER  
Caribbean

MARCOS HANKE  
Caribbean

MIGUEL A. ROLON  
Caribbean

TONY BLANCHARD  
Caribbean

CARRIE SIMMONS  
Gulf

DALE DIAZ  
Gulf

DR. THOMAS FRAZER  
Gulf

CHRIS MOORE  
Mid-Atlantic

MIKE LUISI  
Mid-Atlantic

WARREN ELLIOTT  
Mid-Atlantic

DR. JOHN QUINN  
New England

ERIC REID  
New England
PARTICIPANTS (CONT'D):

TOM NIES
New England

BILL TWEIT
North Pacific

DAVID WITHERELL
North Pacific

DIANA EVANS
North Pacific

SIMON KINNEEN
North Pacific

CHUCK TRACY
Pacific

MARC GORELIN
Pacific

PHIL ANDERSON
Pacific

JESSICA McCRAWLEY
South Atlantic

JOHN CARMICHAEL
South Atlantic

MEL BELL
South Atlantic

ARCHIE SOLIAI
Western Pacific

ED WATAMURA
Western Pacific

ELYSIA GRANGER
Western Pacific
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MICHAEL RUBINO
JIM BALSIGER
SAM RAUCH
NICOLE BONINE
RYAN WULFF
NICOLLE HILL
SARAH BLAND
KATE NAUGHTEN
KARA MECKLEY
IAN LUNDGREN
EMILY FARR
HEATHER COLEMAN
KRISTEN KOCH
TAUNA RANKIN
JENNIFER LUKENS
CANDANCE NACHMAN
RUSSELL DUNN
TIM SARTWELL
CHRIS W. OLIVER
BOB FOY
PAUL DOREMUS
PARTICIPANTS (CONT'D):

KRISTINE CHERRY
CISCO WERNER
ADAM ISSENBERG
MICHAEL TOSATTO
JENNI WALLACE
MICHAEL SEKI
GLENN MERRILL
STEPHANIE HUNT
ALESIA READ
JON HARE
NICHOLAS PIEPER
STACEY NATHANSAN

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PROCEEDINGS

(1:40 p.m.)

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, everyone. I think everybody is on now. Nicholas, do you have any overview of this Webex before we start.

MR. PIEPER: Sure. I can just go over the instructions again real quick. I'll share my screen and we can get started with that. All right. So, if you have anymore issues, just send me a message in the Webex software or you can send me an e-mail. If you want to view the full participant, what you do is you hover the mouse down here and you click on this icon. What that will do, it will show all the participants over here. You can click on someone to send them a private message, a panelist, and someone needs help being muted, you can do that. I'll being taking care of it for the most part though and there are attendees with panelists permission so they need to be unmuted by one of us if they need to say anything. Once again, I'll be taking care
of most of that, but if you want to look, you just
need to click on this view all attendees on the
right here. I will show you who's listed again.
One easy way to unmute yourself is to hit Control
M. You can also click on the microphone icon at
the bottom of the screen. Same with the video.
You can turn your video on and off using this
button here. The chat function does appear on the
right hand panel under there. You just need to
click on the little arrow and select who you want
to send the chat to. Otherwise, if you guys have
any questions, just let me know. I think that's
it.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. Thank you, Nicholas.

Unless anybody has any questions, I'm ready to
begin on the website. With that being done, I
want to thank everybody. Good morning, good
afternoon, wherever you're calling in from or
signing in from. On behalf of myself, Chair for
the West Pac Howard Dunham, Michael Duenas of
Guam, John Gourley of the Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands, Ed Watamura of Hawaii,
and Executive Director Kitty Simonds, I want to thank you, everybody, and offer you a warm welcome. So, across the U.S. in various regional councils I want to especially welcome our distinguished guests, the Assistant Administrator of Fisheries Chris Oliver, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs Sam Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator of Operations Paul Doremus, and the Director of Scientific Program and Chief Science Advisor Cisco Werner as well as other NOAA Fisheries members. I just want to welcome everybody to our CCC meeting and it is customary for our Pacific Islands to always open any meeting with a word of prayer. So, I'll say a short prayer in our native language and then I will make a short summary.

[Prayer said in foreign language.]

MR. SOLIAI: Just a short prayer. We thank you Heavenly Father for these blessings and ask you for your guidance as we do the work of the regional councils and we check our fisheries especially mass production of everybody as we stop
this COVID-19 pandemic so thank you for indulging me in that. You've all received a copy of the opening remarks.

It's in your outboxes and in your inboxes, but we want to touch on some of the few items that our on there and as Robert Burns, the great Scot poet, noted over two centuries ago, the best laid schemes for mice and men are often askew. And so, our plans to host you all at beautiful Turtle Bay and offer you a warm Polynesian hospitality, that hasn't happened, obviously we all understand the COVID-19 disease, but we are thankful that we have fabulous IT especially here on the islands so we can have these meetings remotely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made our responsibility more important and highlights the often overlooked fact that managing our nation's fisheries is about ensuring that Americans have food. Management is very important for fish stocks, aqua species, guaranteeing our fisherman earn decent livings, pursue recreational fishing,
and overall important for our region, but, you know, we must not forget that the bottom line is that our nations provide nutritious seafood to our people and, you know, as you know, our US EEZ comprises the second largest US EEZ in the world and we are mandated, you know, the contributions stated in the MSA is that our fisheries try to provide the nation food supply so that's all being overlooked and I think it's time for us to take a different perspective and highlight that, you know, food supply is one of the topics for various councils.

The fishery, as we all know, we have the CARES act that has provided 300 million for the fisheries and I think there is a big disparity how that currently is being dished out when we compare ourselves to the agricultural industry. Since it's worked, you know, while both fisheries and agriculture feed the nation, fishery sector is receiving about 3 percent of its revenue while the agriculture is receiving relief that's more than 16 percent of its revenue. So, I think there's a
lot more that we should do or we can do and hopefully, in the next round coming that, you know, the nation and our leaders can look at more favorably towards fishery sectors.

So, if you'd take the time to read the statement that I put out and if you have any questions, we can take it from there. We're moving on to introductions. Why don't we go around the round the table and we can introduce ourselves from the various councils. So, my name is Archie Soliai. I am the Chair for the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and we'll go through West Pac and then we'll go around the other regional councils. Before we do that, I apologize, Chris Oliver, we will have Chris for his opening remarks before we do the introductions.

MR. OLIVER: Okay, Archie. I can be really brief. Can you hear me.

MR. SOLIAI: Yes. I can hear you fine, Chris.

MR. OLIVER: Hopefully you can see me.
I want to thank you. Good to see you and thank you and Kitty and Western Pacific Council for virtually hosting this meeting and you can see a my attire. I'm doing my best to maintain a positive island attitude although everyone shares my deep disappointment that we're all sitting in our living rooms or apartments or offices rather than all together there at Turtle Bay. I was very much looking forward to it and I always look forward to these meetings. I have been going to the Council Coordination Meetings for I guess over 20 years and of all the meetings that we all go to and fisheries, certainly for me this has always been one of my favorite, you know, and it's partly because it's a great opportunity with our rotating hosting format and a great opportunity to visit other regions and places to see how they do business, to share our experiences and they are all different, but in many ways, they are all the same and I've been working with many of you for so, so many years that it's just a great opportunity to see you all and get together and,
you know, in addition to our business, to do fun things together and I really miss that more than ever obviously and so, I just regret that we're not all together, but dealing with especially Chad (phonetic) and thankfully, we have the technology that we have to still conduct our business and not to say that there is no impact to our mission. We know that there are, but I've been impressed by our collective ability, both our agency and the council's, to maintain our essential business and operations. You know, obviously, we are suffering from some of our assessments and surveys and other operational compromises we're having to make, but we'll get through them. And so, you know, I'll save some additional comments for later on sort of what we're doing in the near term and how we're looking at this in terms of maybe realigning our priorities to come out the other side of this. So, thank you, Archie, and that's all I have for the moment.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Chris. We appreciate those comments and certainly, we regret
the fact that we're not able to host everybody this time around. Hopefully, when we get through the other side we will be able to fulfill that obligation to welcome each and every one of you to our region. So, thank you again, Chris. So, with saying that, we'll go around with our introductions. I'll start with West Pac and we'll make our way east.

MR. WATAMURA: This is Ed Watamura, Vice Chair, representing Hawaii with the council.

MR. GOURLEY: John Gourley, Northern Mariana Islands, where it's 4 o'clock in the morning.

MR. SOLIAI: Do we have Guam.

MR. DUENAS: Michael Duenas from Guam and it is also 4:00 a.m.

MR. SOLIAI: Good night or good morning to you guys, however you want to take it. Howard.

MR. DUNHAM: Hi. Howard Dunam, Vice Chair of Western Pacific.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. We'll move on to the West Coast.
MR. TRACY: Chuck Tracy, Council Executive Director.

MR. ANDERSON: Hello, everyone. This is Phil Anderson, Chair of the Pacific Council.

MR. GORELNIK: Good morning or good afternoon. This is Mark Gorelnik, Vice Chair of the Pacific Council.

MR. SOLIAI: North Pacific.

MR. WITHERELL: Dave Witherell, Executive Director.

MR. KINNEEN: Hi. This is Simon Kinneen, the Chairman of the North Pacific.

MR. TWEIT: Hello. This is Bill Tweit, Vice Chair of the North Pacific.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Who's next? Caribbean?

MR. PIEPER: Hi, everyone. I muted all the participants again. Not sure what was going on with the audio there, but if you need to speak, you will have to unmute yourself again.

MR. SOLIAI: Can we get the introductions from the Caribbean?
MR. PIEPER: Once again, I'm not sure what that is, but I did mute everyone.

MR. SOLIAI: Could we move on to the South Atlantic while the Caribbean tries to work out their audio issues?

MR. CARMICHAEL: John Carmichael, Executive Director of the South Atlantic.

MR. MCCAWLEY: This is Jessica McCawley. I'm the Chairman of the South Atlantic Council.

MR. BELL: I'm the Vice Chair of South Atlantic Council.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Move on to the Gulf.

MS. SIMMONS: Hello, everyone. Carrie Simmons, Executive Director of Gulf Simmons. Can you hear me?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, we can hear you, thank you.

MR. FRASER: My name is Tom Fraser, Chair of Gulf Council.

MR. DIAZ: This is Dale Diaz, Vice Chair of Gulf Council.
MR. SOLIAI: Okay. We'll move on to the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. MOORE: This is Chris Moore, Executive Director.

MR. LUISI: Hi everyone. This is Mike Luisi, Chair of the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. ELLIOTT: Hello. This is warren Elliott, Vice Chair of the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. SOLIAI: Moving north to New England Council.

MR. QUINN: John Quinn, Chair.

MR. NIES: Good afternoon. Tom Nies, Executive Director New England Council.

MR. REID: Good day, everyone. Eric Reid, Vice Chairman of the New England Council.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Can we call one more time back to the Caribbean?

MR. ROLON: Miguel Rolon.

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, I can hear you. All right. There being nobody there I think we've covered everybody and we'll -- councils, can we get introductions from the Fisheries please?
MR. DOREMUS: Hello, everyone, this is Paul Doremus, DAA for operates.

MR. RAUCH: Sam Rauch, DAA for regulatory programs.

MR. WERNER: Cisco Werner, Chief Science Advisor.

MR. RUBINO: Michael Rubino, Senior Advisor for Seafood Strategy.

MS. WALLACE: This is Jenni Wallace, the Acting Director for Sustainable Fisheries.

MR. ISSENBERG: Adam Issenberg in NOAA GC.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. I think that's it. It's great to meet you all virtually and again, hopefully, I get to meet you in person.

I'm sorry. John, were you trying to chime in?

All right. Welcome back to our main CCC meeting. We will go to the approval of our agenda. I hope you've all gotten a chance to take a look at it for today and tomorrow. Unless there is any discussion or questions as far as this agenda, we will obtain the motion to approve agenda.
MR. NIES: Hi, this is Tom Nies. I move we approve the agenda.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Do we have a second?

MR. GOURLEY: Second, John Gourley.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. The move to second it. Any discussion?

[Agenda approved by voice votes]

MR. SOLIAI: So, we will move on to the next item on our agenda, which is the recent issues with council operation and NMFS. So, in the essence of time, I know we've got a very aggressive agenda for today, but we're only allotting about 10 minutes so we ask that all the councils limit their discussions. So, in the 30 minute we'll have the overview of the issues and then we'll move on to each council reporting on their status. Okay, Paul.

MR. DOREMUS: Yes. This is Paul Doremus. I'll start off and hopefully, we can make up a little bit of time here. It's just make a few comments about the overall operating
environments and then Sam and Cisco will be able to talk about regulatory and science components of that in particular. We've been interacting with the CCC for a period of time as we've moved through March, April, and deep into May at this point turning the corner on another month pretty soon.

We are continuing to operate in telework mode. That has not changed and no one has set a date for that to change although we're expecting at a point in the not too distant future a shift out of this phase of mandatory telework and into a phase of lesser restrictions on maximum telework where we will be able to move back into our facilities in limited measure for functions that have particular dependence on access to the facilities or to field work as it not a surprise to anyone that components have been open during this whole time although there are some components of our work that have not been able to be conducted at all. A lot of our field research and our survey deployments have greatly suffered the
most under the very restricted parameters that we're currently operating in.

We are anticipating that will change.

Our heaviest focus is on those areas where mission continuity concerns are the highest and the center of that is really around our survey and data collection activities. Cisco will speak in greater depth to that, but we're in a challenging position now both with those kind of deployments as well as the ability to come back into our facilities in limited measure. With the virus still having a lot of presence around different parts of the country, buried but still there, and we have generally not met their criteria for phase one transition, which is where we have a full 14-day period of declining cases and fatalities associated with COVID-19. So, that clock hasn't started, but as you well know, everybody knows, different parts of the country, activities are evolving. Different parts of our country are opening up and we're continuing to operate, but being very judicious of slow, steady, flexible in
our approach to reopening the facilities in any kind of normal operating mode.

We have I think going ahead phasing where we'll probably see continued maximum telework for some period of time, limited presence at our facilities, maximum 25 percent for a rough estimate, before we move to a more relaxed setting, which, again, is probably only going to have around 50 percent of staff present in our facilities if you will.

The bottom line message really, it's going to be a long time before we get back to anything close to everybody in our facilities operating in some semblance of normality. Most Federal agencies, fisheries, all of NOAA, all of the department is anticipating that the new reality that we gradually move into is going to be very different in terms of our operations. There will be an increasing reliance on and a far heavier reliance on telework and other types of flexibilities than we had previous to COVID-19 pandemic and that's likely to be a permanent
change. I would anticipate much greater restrictions on travel for a long period of time as well as on other types of large in-person gatherings. It is really not until, in my personal view, we have a widely distributed and widely used vaccine for this virus where we're going to see enough lessening that we could say we're in a new normal. That's some time away, many months away, and in the meantime we're going to continue to emphasize working remotely and trying to bring on board capabilities that have been most restricted during the period of time when social distancing requirements have been so pervasive.

That's gradually lessening, light at the end of the tunnel, but still a ways off, what's going to change most are those mission critical areas like survey and field research.

So, with that very general introduction to our operating status, I can turn it over to Cisco to talk about the science components of this given the high degree of focus and interest on
those functions. Cisco.

MR. PIEPER: And I'll just jump in there, Cisco. I have your presentation ready if you'd like to use that as well.

MR. WERNER: Yes, thanks. That would be great. If you could bring it up that would be wonderful. Thanks, Paul, and thanks everybody for the opportunity to be able to speak to you on where we are with some aspects of the science. Today I'm going to give you an update on the status of surveys, which I'm sure is something you've all been informed on. I'll give some additional details and questions that might come up. And tomorrow I'll be speaking more about next steps and what we're thinking in terms of surveys and funding of surveys and so on.

So, the next slide if I could have it please. The summary is on the left hand side. The reason I put up that map with the different surveys is to show that this is where we have been affected. They're from the Northeast, Southeast, to Hawaiian islands, Alaska and overall, where we
are now. Between March and July of this year, we are estimating through July of this year, we have a combined 55 surveys we canceled. Twenty five of them are OMAO surveys -- meaning white ship surveys. Some of these surveys have multiple legs so the 25 surveys have three or four legs, but in general, it's about that number. And regarding the surveys that we do in partnership with the academia states or charters with industry, it's about 30 surveys that we've had to cancel, each one of these a very, very painful decision.

And in total in terms of number of days at sea, it's about, 1,300, almost 1,400 days so far. We are evaluating remaining surveys in FY '20 of all sorts, let it be OMAO or in partnership with other organizations and we continue to work on that to see how we can actually execute as we learn about how to go out to sea.

In addition to looking at this fiscal year's surveys, we are also working on next year FY '21 in what we refer to as the Fleet Allocation Plan to see how it is that we proceed based on
surveys that might be higher priority or modifications we need to do, in view of not being able to conduct some of the surveys this year.

So, the next slide, if I could please, is a breakdown, again, an estimate of the breakdown per center. It's a very simple breakdown. Again, the total number of days, remember, is about 1,380, but it gives you a sense of each science center, Alaska, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, number of days they may have lost in charters or partner surveys in OMAO or white ship surveys, and then the total numbers that have been affected. This is just to give you a breakdown per region.

Some regions, are front-loaded, probably because of the season, the northern ones, Alaska and Northeast, are perhaps higher numbers right now because those surveys need to happen earlier in the year. Others like the Southeast, Southwest, and Pacific Islands still, can proceed later in the year so that this also explains some of the differences in magnitudes of the surveys.
So, that, again, is just to give you sense of a regional breakdown of the impact per center. If I could have the next slide please.

So, the impact, if we were to talk about stock assessments in FY '20, they are largely on schedule. There are very few stocks that are actually, assessed with data collected in the same year. There are some, but they are very few so for FY '20, the assessments are proceeding.

For FY '21, the assessments will be stock dependent. For some stocks, we do have estimates based on other years in terms of what the impact might be when in past years we haven't been able to conduct surveys say for mechanical or other reasons and the ships weren't able to go out. For some other stocks, we won't know what the impact might be until we have we have the opportunity to look at all the available data including the fishery dependent data.

In term of mitigation, for the surveys, we're trying to do as much as we can. The Northwest Center, had to cancel the spring legs of
the West Coast Groundfish surveys, and is now trying to beef up, the two legs that take place in August and September to try to partially offset bit the other legs that they had to cancel earlier in the year. The Southwest Center is trying to consolidate surveys later in the year to see if they can conduct a CPS, their Coastal Pelagic Surveys. The Alaska Center is relying in part also on some advanced technologies. Three saildrones just left the Bay Area and they are headed on their way up to the Bering Sea. These saildrones will be up there in July and conduct at least some acoustic surveys. There will be some data, but not certainly the full swath that we would have liked.

And they are also collecting some upward looking acoustic sensors, which are those spherical instruments that you see on the bottom right of the slide. We are going to try to recover those instruments that have been there for a couple of years. We acknowledge that they will never fully offset our ability to have had a
survey out there.

And I think the last slide, if I could please, talks about what are the general protocols that we're working on for returning to sea. We certainly have learned from protocols that have been developed by the Academic Fleet, the Maritime Fleet, and the Fisheries Fleet as to what aspects go into developing these protocols. And of course, we're working that within NOAA and in general starting with the guiding principle that we want to ensure safety involved, the crew, and then we have to work through a number of issues including quarantine and testing. Testing is somewhat in flux right now, in terms of what kind of tests and the availability and perhaps the accuracy of the test. Issues of having to fly from location to location because not everybody is where their ship is, so that involves going through airports and such. Then what do you do once you're on the vessel, you know, the cleaning and distancing and so on. What do you do if there is a suspected COVID case at sea and then,
finally, what do you when you return to port under normal conditions?

And so, all of the aspects are things that we are continuing to work on, continuing to evolve and in consultation with a whole suite of folks to try to see how we return as soon as possible safely to finish whatever we can in FY '20 and also make sure that we can proceed in FY '21. So, that's really what I wanted to give you a snapshot of in terms of where we are, what the impacts have been, some mitigation, and also, next steps and I'll stop there and take any questions or comments if there are any. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Cisco and Paul. Sam, did you want to add anything before I open up the --

MR. RAUCH: Yes. Just a couple things from the regulatory side. One, we have been working, as many of the councils know, on looking at ways to deal with the challenges presented by the pandemic on the fishing fleets and the fishing operations. There are a number of councils who
have recommended emergency action and we have been working through those issues on trying to get those regulations in place. That largely preceded, but is mirrored by new requests in the president's latest executive order, which asked the councils to do something that the councils are currently largely doing, which is to look at the various barriers to prosecuting fishing industry and recommend ways that we might relieve those restrictions mindful of our overall statutory mandates. It's something that we do periodically. In this administration, we recently sent out a response to meet that executive order on that.

I wanted to talk about two other aspects. One, we are working through this. As Chris said, it's been remarkable the way we have able to keep pace in this new working environment and as the councils continue to implement their workload, we continue to try to implement those regulations in the back end, but it is difficult. It is more difficult than it seems. I know many of you feel that way as well and I just wanted to
ask for patience as we try to move through all of the actions. We're trying to keep up and maintain some degree of normalcy, but it is difficult and so, I think we need some patience in terms of expected schedule and our ability to be responsive to the many requests that we have received from the council on top of the normal workload.

And the final thing I wanted to mention was observers. Much like surveys, we have had difficulty carrying out the full observer function. Across the country, we largely have observers in place and are going out on fishing vessels everywhere except the partial coverage fishery in Alaska and the fisheries in New England and both of those have unique difficult logistical issues with state mandated quarantines. In New England, we've got numerous borders you have to cross. There's also the case with some places in Alaska. We continue to work very hard to work the observer provider companies to open those areas as well. I am hopeful that these observer waivers won't go on much longer in the few places where
they are still going on, but they will go on for a little bit longer. We continue to have the ability to work with the Regional administrators. If there is a particular problem on a case-by-case vessel basis with a particular observer on a particular vessel, the administrators remain to do that [waive]. But largely we are on the path towards redeploying the observers in places where they were temporarily halted. Some places we've never altered them. But I think that there will still be a brief amount of time in the next few weeks where we will continue to maintain waivers, but we're on the downward decline there. And I think we've done a good job with the regions working with the observer provider companies on the approaches that allow the redeployment of those other vessels. That's all I wanted to say. I will take any questions along with the other presenters on this topic.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Sam. At this time, I'll open it up for questions and we're going to go around the table so we'll start from
North Pacific Council, any questions?

MR. WITHERELL: I don't have any questions. Bill or Simon may.

MR. TWEIT: This is Bill Tweit. I have a question for Cisco. Cisco, I'm wondering how you are responding to the concern that we're hearing from industry that from their perspective logistical issues involved in putting up factory trawler, for instance, out to sea to fish right now, in their view, those logistical issues appropriately dealing with measures to prevent the spread of pandemic. They're wondering why those issues are different between their operations and the survey operations that they are able to go out. They're able to address them and the agency isn't able to address them. They're having a hard time understanding how they are that different from the agency survey vessels either the charter or their white ships. So, I'm wondering how you address or how you respond to that.

MR. WERNER: Sure, I can try. This has been discussed at length with Chris and Paul and
others, so if you want to chime in that would be
great too. First, we work very closely to
understand and incorporate the safety protocols
that the fishing industry itself had developed
working even with, some of the folks that they
consulted with. So, it's not clear whether these
are straight apples-to-apples comparisons to put
it that way in the sense that we look to try to
see how we get out all our folks to conduct the
surveys that we were going to conduct in the
Bering Sea. It turned out that the surveys that we
would have to conduct would have required probably
being out a full eight weeks continuously, to
minimize the amount of travel that had to happen
between airports. The quarantining, the testing
that would have to happen say boarding in Dutch
Harbor versus somewhere else and other aspects
that in the end resulted in such a challenging, if
you will, and difficult logistical undertaking to
overcome that the conclusion at the end was that
we would not be able to actually pull it off. It
involves getting people away from home for up to
three months, because it would be two months continuous at sea, plus possibly two weeks of quarantine book-ending those two months. It would imply getting the testing in place, it implied, again, a number of things that in the end it was just going to be very difficult to get together and we worked to the last minute in terms of how far to the right of the schedule could we push this before we went and still have it make it sense in terms of the sampling season and some of the logistics. Perhaps industry was able to overcome but it was not something that we felt we could do. I don't know if Chris or Paul, do you want to add to how we arrived at that position, but it is a question that we struggled with and, like I said, to the last minute until we decided we could not go forward.

MR. DOREMUS: Cisco, this is Paul. I don't have anything to add to that. I think that covers the fundamentals. Every deployment is different. The risk factors vary quite a lot and then with remote longtime period types of
deployments the complications get amplified very quickly. Our teams worked aggressively to turn every angle that they could to figure out a way to get this done and with the clock ticking, we just weren't able to commit. We hope to be moving into a period of time where some of the mitigation measures can gradually be dialed back, but we're not there at this time and the government as a whole isn't. We're not even in our facility. We're still in this mandatory mode of full telework. So, it's hard to estimate the logistical complications of pulling off the particular surveys that Cisco is referring to when the logistical barriers lessen next year we might have a different option set. We're starting just to see opportunities as we look further out on the calendar.

MR. OLIVER: This is Chris, can you hear me?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. OLIVER: Yeah, Bill. I appreciate some of the frustration. That was probably one of
the most difficult decisions we've made certainly since I've been here for obvious reasons, but it is a little apples and oranges. The logistical issues that Cisco referred to, we and Bob Foye made a tremendous attempt to try and put together a plan to pull this off, but it just wasn't going to work in the end. We're also working atmosphere adhering to very rigorous review of travel approvals. We had one small survey that required two people to count for a day and it took as long as a week to get the travel authorization cleared and in this case, we were talking about dozens of people from multiple locations with much more challenging or difficult circumstances and frankly, the likelihood of getting those travel approvals approved in the time that we would to get them approved was a pretty far stretch as well so I'll throw that into not trying to use that as an excuse, but that was definitely a factor we took into consideration too was the difficulty in actually getting travel approval.

MR. TWEIT: This is Bill Tweit. The
only thing I would note back is I heard a couple of times that's it's not really Apples-to-Apples. To the extent that I know the circumstances the seafood industry is dealing with, about the only factor that I heard NOAA fisheries describe that's any different that the factors that the seafood industry has been dealing is the one that Chris mentioned at the end, the need to get travel approvals. Otherwise, I think all the other, at least to the best of my knowledge, I didn't hear you describe any other logistical issues that were any different than the ones that the industry has dealt with. So, and observation for you to think about as we all work to communicate this, is I think talking to a group of folks who by and large will have just successfully addressed most of the obstacles that you point out and so, we're going to need to think about how to communicate that.

MR. WERNER: And this is a point, if I could just add, in terms of some of the logistical issues that are really difficult to overcome. One of the things that we converged on in terms of
what would be the safest and best way to complete the survey it would have meant eight weeks without being able to come back to port, you know, being up in the Bering, you know, some places we simply could just not go back to. In the past, these surveys, are maybe three weeks long and there is a change in personnel and all of that. So, being in a remote location as the Bering is for eight weeks, is something that logistically we've never had to do. It's not to say that it's not doable, but I mean in my view to say we're going to go out and do something we've never before as challenging a situation I think everybody in the Bering this time of year potentially, in remote locations, under all of these other circumstances to me was another factor that adds to all the little pieces. Like, for example, as Chris brought up and Paul brought up, in order to make it work, it would have had to have required everything to line up and we would have had to have done something we had not done before in terms of the logistics and the preparation and everything for an eight week
at sea survey with four of our ships, etc.

MR. TWEIT: So, this is Bill again.

You're going to be saying that to a group of industry folks who have just done something they've never done before of a similar magnitude. That's my point is that everything you have faced they've faced as well and they're going to be hearing you with the ears of a group that have all those same challenges, that made all those same tough decisions. They're running longer shifts. They've got people who've stayed on board from the Wang (phonetic) Fishery all the way up to the Pollock Fishery. They've got folks who are putting in five, six months at sea this year in order to address. So, it's going to be a tough audience hearing that particular argument. And so, you're going to have to put some more though into that I think.

MR. WERNER: Okay. Good point. Thanks, Bill. Appreciate it.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Anything else North Pacific Council? Now, we'll move on to the
Pacific Council. Questions?

MR. GOURLEY: I don't have any questions. Phil or Marc or Ryan you have any comments?

MR. ANDERSON: This is Phil. I don't have any. Just to echo the concerns that Bill Tweit raised, similar kinds of issues with the Whiting Fishery in the West Coast in the operations and the change in those operations. So, largely the same folks catch a processor end of some of the other ship's folks as well, but that would be the only thing I would add.

MR. GORELNIK: This is Marc. I've got nothing further to add.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you. We'll move on to the Caribbean Council.

MR. ROLON: I don't know. At this time, we don't have any questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. Gulf Council?

SPEAKER: I don't have any questions, thank you.

SPEAKER: No questions from my end
either.

MR. SOLIAI: Moving on to the South Atlantic Council.

SPEAKER: No questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Mid-Atlantic?

SPEAKER: No questions for me.

SPEAKER: None for me either, thank you.


MR. NIES: Thank you. This is Tom Nies. I have one question that I think is probably for Sam but perhaps Cisco as well. We are starting to get some questions about how placing observers on fishing boat in these condition complies with the national standards. I wonder if you've heard or addressed that question yet.

MR. RAUCH: No, we haven't addressed that question specifically. We do have observers on boats, as I said, most of the country. There is an exception in New England. Fisherman are on board these vessels often in condition, you know, to get back to some of the questions about surveys. The fishing industry has worked through
a lot of these issues in most places and have figured out ways to fish safely. We have not seen huge widespread issues among fishing crew and so, we believe that you can put them on safely. It's been done in the rest country and where we've got fishing in the Alaska fleets and the West Coast fleets are the places that we haven't seen outbreaks. We think that there are certain provisions that are reasonable to undertake, like, they're working on preventing vessel hopping and enforcing (inaudible) with the provider companies, but the sheer fact that you are putting a person in a factory or on a plant or on a boat where they will have to work in close proximity with another person, that's not inherently unsafe if certain precautions are taken.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you. I'll open it up to the Western Pacific.

MS. SIMONDS: All right, thank, Mr. Chair. Kitty here. Paul, this question is for you. So, in your analysis of opening up the NMFS offices in the country. Where are we on that
list? As you probably know and have read, you know, are region is the least affected by the virus. Can you tell me where you are?

MR. DOREMUS: The front of the line as always, Kitty.

MS. SIMONDS: I hope so because, you know, I think the only factor is -- well, let's take American Samoa where the governor has closed any visiting there through July 31, but we are concerned because we have over fishing conditions on one of the two important fisheries in American Samoa and the (inaudible) and a number of plans to go down there to work on data and as we try to work through these issues and these problems. So, this is very important to us and so, if we're number one, thank you very much and I hope you let me know as soon as possible.

MR. DOREMUS: Well, Kitty, we don't really have a list and I'm fully expecting that, as everyone has noted all the way along and I've talked a little bit about, we're going to change our operating mode in different parts of the
country at different times.

MS. SIMONDS: Right.

MR. DOREMUS: But what I meant about being in the front of the line the circumstances as I understand them in your region are most amenable to return sooner. We have not made a decision to do that.

MS. SIMONDS: Right.

MR. DOREMUS: It's among the things being considered and we're coordinating with all of NOAA as we go about doing this because so many of our facilities are in with other parts of NOAA or in many instances, with other agencies or other partners. So, we're coordinating with a lot of different folks. We're moving at pace, but NOAA leadership, and, you know, this came up in earlier a point Chris made, we are being required over and over again to be cautious, err on the side of safety, and concentrate on the mission operations that are most heavily affected first. So, that screen is there, but we clearly looking at different parts of the country where the health
conditions overall are looking different and give us a different opportunity. So, this is what we are taking into consideration for sure. I just want to let you know that.

MR. SIMONDS: Right. I understand and I just want to make sure that we, you know, brought this up at this meeting with everybody listening. All parts NMFS that we are anxious to have NMFS open their office and be able to take care of our immediate needs, which you all know, which is a Big Eye quota, which is also our number 10 so thank you very much.

MR. DOREMUS: Absolutely, Kitty and again, we are not closed, we have been open and there are many needs in all parts of the country that we can address in our current operating mode, but certainly our focus is on our scientific data collection and field work, and that will progress as we get conditions that allow that and we get approvals to do so. So, thank you, Kitty, for bringing that point up and we'll hope to be able to get to a more robust ability to support council
requirements gradually as the environment improves.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Paul. I think Tom and Kitty basically addressed the questions I had. Anybody else from West Pac? I guess not. Did I miss anybody else? Comments or questions? Otherwise, we will move on to the next item on our agenda, which is the council reports on regional issues and activities that made it through COVID-19. We are allocating 30 minutes for this so we're going to around the table again and ask all the councils to provide just a brief report on how the impacts (inaudible). So, we'll start from the North Pacific and we'll make our way down. North Pacific?

MR. WITHERELL: Thank you, Dave, we're all here. We had to make a number of meeting changes. We canceled our April meeting. We had a special meeting in May to address several emergency rule requests. The council made a few changes or recommended a few changes to the rules
for the remainder of 2020 to reduce the burden on
the Halibut Charter Fishery and our Halibut and
Stable Fish IFQ fisheries. We have a council
meeting set up for the next couple of weeks
including are SSC and AP and the agenda is just
limited to those must do items.

So, with the limited meetings, we've
developed a pretty large bow wave of issues that
we'll need to address either in October, an
extended meeting, or having additional meetings to
make up for our lost time. Staff, of course, is
still working from home. That encapsulates what
we're doing. Thank you, David. We'll move on to
the Pacific Council.

MR. TRACY: Thanks. This is Chuck. We
also have had to cancel and reformat our council
meetings. We had our first Webinar in April and
it went off quite smoothly operationally and we'll
be doing the same for June although we've had to
really cut back our agenda to really essential
agenda items primarily regulatory related issues
so we are falling behind on some of the other
things that councils do like, you know, improve our fishery management plans and do some of those other things that make the fishing industry more efficient and address some ongoing issues so we've been struggling a little bit with how to make up for those things in terms of, you know, if we have to continue to meet by webinar and do some agenda triage so we're looking at some different formats for our council meetings perhaps some longer meetings or breaking it up instead of meeting continuously and that's something that we will continue to look at.

We've had a few issues with the webinar platforms. We used RingCentral, which is essentially Zoom, for our April meeting. It went really well, but now that it's not allowed to use Zoom for the video portion of a webinar, we've been looking around at Webex and some other options. We've also been looking into the possibility of getting Zoom approved and our IT staff has gone all the way to the Assistant Chief Information Office at NOAA to get some input on
that and some feedback so I think we've had some progress being made, but nothing that looks like it's going to happen too soon.

Other things. You know, the council took on some emergency regulations and built some in-season flexibility into our Salmon process to allow some transfer of opportunity as conditions prohibited, you know, early season fisheries, which they have. We made some in-season management changes to our non-fish fisheries as well to provide some additional opportunity so we're doing what we can. I guess as has been touched on the observer waiver policy is something that's been sort of a big issue for us. There is quite of concern from industry about this issue about the safety of their crew and putting all their business at risk, but our fishery services work hard to keep observers on boats. We started with a two-week quarantine, but have now placed observers on our (inaudible) fishery boats. It's kind of a one-to-one working model. There has been some requests for some additional
consideration, but, you know, I think we recognize that the NMFS Fishery Service is working within the constraints of the emergency rule or emergency order and the criteria established there so that's an ongoing issue that we have frequent discussions with industry about. That about covers our business here. I don't know if Phil or Marc or Ryan have anything would like to add.

MR. GORELNIK: I would just quickly maybe emphasize the concern we have relative to falling behind. As Chuck said, we had a successful April meeting under the virtual meeting approach, however, I found it more difficult to manage the meeting successfully. It's harder to get through as many agenda items as we could if we were face-to-face and with the prospects of the impact of the pandemic lasting for an undetermined amount of time looking ahead, the issues associated with falling behind I think are going to become more pronounced and looking for a solution to that some of things that Chuck discussed or some of the things we're looking at.
And I also just wanted to express my gratitude to the National Marine Fisheries Service for acting on a couple of the emergency regulations that we requested and I am sure your inundated with other requests coming from other parts of the country as well and it was much appreciated that you responded to those requests.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Pacific Council. We'll move on to the Caribbean.

MR. ROLON: Okay. I seem to have problems with the call here, but, very briefly, we've canceled all of our in-person meetings and from this day until August all of our meetings will be through Webinar. We also have to prepare COVID control plan to comply with the local law that for the way we are going to be operating allowing the people in and out of the office. We will probably be operating teleworking. Most of the staff are what they call high risk for getting COVID associated to a person in their family. So, we may end up working all the way to December 31, 2020, and maybe next year everything goes more
smoothly with the COVID and the vaccine and
everything we will reopen business as usual in the
first half of 2021.

In the national arena, we are
coordinating with NOAA Fisheries, the
International Fishery Office, and the
international organizations in the Caribbean
because we are coordinators and organizers of
working groups of shared species like the Grincon
and spawn integration species and so forth. So,
we are the one who coordinate most of these
meetings so we are going to also do work with
those meetings through webinars and we hope to
start operating in-person international meetings
by 2021. That's all that we have to say at this
time. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Miguel. I will
move on to the Gulf Council.

MS. SIMMONS: Thank you. So, the Gulf
Council is planning virtual meetings through July
for SSC and in June, we're going to hold a four
day webinar council meeting. We're going to try
to cover as many things as we can. We're going to build in a lot of breaks and we're going to start a little bit later and end a little earlier. We distributed a survey via press release to fisherman and stakeholders requesting feedback on fish related businesses who could be affected directly by COVID-19 and remind everyone that you still need to guidelines formed by Magnuson, but we were interested in any regulation changes that could offset those economic impacts from the pandemic. And so, the council reviewed the results of that survey in June and they consider any management actions that show emergency rule requests or other changes such as changes to the recreational season length.

We have some good news. It seems like people are fishing more again as things open up especially in Florida and other states. So, the commercial fisheries initially there was a lot of concerns about the supply chain and processors. Some of these questions have slowed now that restaurants are being reopened at reduced capacity
and there is outdoor seating.

   The for hire fisheries, a lot of the hotels and resorts are opened back up. Beaches are open so they are fishing again it seems. Some of the larger operations or head boats that can carry 50 or more people are operating at reduced capacity of course and that depends on the state or county regulations.

   Private anglers seem to be less impacted by COVID-19 and have an increased effort. So, to date, there's been no changes to each state's private recreational season for our favorite fish, Red Snapper.

   So, the council will be looking at some of the gaps and monitoring for landings and effort and that was largely due to no sampling in March and April and then May. This sounds like inheriting some of our state partners that they are now at the docks and they helping assist with some of the sampling now as some of the regulations and quarantine measures have been lessened.
So, the council will be looking at that in June and I will stop there and see if the Chair or Vice Chair would like to add anything.

DR. FRAZER: No, I thought you did a good job, Carrie. Nothing to add on my end.

MR. DIAZ: Nothing to add on my end.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Gulf Council, and we'll move on to the South Atlantic.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay. Thank you. The fishery issues here in the South Atlantic have been pretty significant and although there's some recovery, they still are unveiling. So, commercial fisheries are often pretty small boats, low-level catches they really rely on book of restaurant demands. A lot of restaurants depend on tourists, so it's had a big impact on them. By species, anywhere from say 10 to 90 percent off their normal pace. Things that were appealing to home cooks or someone who had a retail market has done a little better. For hire fleets, we're down probably as much as 90 percent in April. The charter boats and head boats, they are doing a
little better now with some of the slow lifting. Maybe they'll be 75 percent down in May, maybe a little better. We were kind of bracketed by major closures on important tourist areas between Dare County being closed in North Carolina and Monroe County being closed down in the Florida Keys and those areas are pretty fisher-dependent for the for hire and commercial and everything.

We've seen the private effort be very variable. Some areas were closed access, boat ramps and such being closed. Other areas saw a big spike from people having the time and ability to go out, but it definitely seems like where there's a lot of dependent upon out of state license and the tourist trade, but it's a substantial reduction there not surprising so there are some areas in Florida where April or May be 75 to 80 percent of the folks, you know, charter boat guys' business and getting that back is a lot of concern for them.

From the council perspective, you know, one of our big concerns is the data strain and
Cisco gave us a good update on what's going on with the federal situation. We depend on state surveys as well so fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data gaps are probably going to be significant. We also are hot bed of recreational so we're interested how the MRIP estimates are going to be developed in the coming years given they essentially lost two months of sampling. That's still a lot of concern for our fisherman and our council members.

Then, as far as the council operations, we like all others moved to working remotely for staff. It's really minimally disruption. I feel like we've done a good job of keeping up with critical tasks and keeping our council members in the loop with all that's been going on with COVID and CARES and executive orders and everything else that's come at us during this time. One of the things we've done is tried to gather impacts information to help our states as they try to do their qualifications for CARES. We also think about what types of things we need to do in terms
of emergency actions to make our fisherman can
fully use their ACOs during the remainder of this
year as they start to get opened back up and we'll
have a council meeting in two weeks via webinar.
We'll be talking about that at that time. The
biggest impact of that is it just takes a lot more
time for planning and training to get everyone on
board, but we got a four-day webinar meeting,
which should be quite a challenge I expect at
times to keep everyone interested and engaged.
And had part AP and NSCC meetings via webinar.
We've done those in the past so it wasn't too big
of a disruption for those guys.

We did cancel our Snapper Grouper AP
that was planned in early April because fisherman
were not in the state of mind to think about
coming to an AP meeting when they were just trying
to keep their heads above water and figure out
what they were going to get for recovery funds and
take care of their businesses so we put off some
business we'll have to pick up later.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you,
John. We'll move in to the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. LUISI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have a simple report here today. Again, my name is Mike Luisi. I'm Chair of the Mid. And so, similar to the other regions, our staff have been working from home since late March and they've been doing a really good job of not falling too far behind regarding the works that's on their plates. We've to make adjustments to our meeting just like everyone else. The one thing about our council it that we have, you know, we've used the webinar format for many of our meetings. Not necessarily our council meetings, but for all of the other meetings that go into it so most of our members and most of our stakeholders are pretty comfortable and familiar with that format.

We've had to make adjustments to both our April and our June meetings. They were canceled as in-person, but moved to webinar. We are planning a three day meeting in June via webinar and we've had to schedule a one day meeting in July to address a significant issue in
the Illex Fishery in the amendment that we've been working on for quite some time just due to timing considerations.

The one thing that we're talking about, and I'd be curious to hear if anyone else is considering it, Chris and Warren and I have been talking about maybe thinking we would go to some form of a hybridized model for meetings, you know, starting in August depending on the situation around the country, but we have considered the idea that we would bring the members themselves together and use whatever technology would be available, you know, social distancing obviously in the meeting room, but then we would have the audience participate somehow virtually so we wouldn't have, you know, more than 30 people in the room at any given time. It's just something we're considering and we've had such success with the webinars based on the participation that we've been able to get. It's just an idea that we have.

Lastly, from staff, you know, I know that there's, and John Carmichael just mentioned
this, you know, the data stream issues are going
to be important for us, but it would be extremely
helpful to have any information regarding the
social and economic impacts on fishing communities
as well as that fishing effort and catch data
during this time if we're able to collect, you
know, anything for staff to help us plan and help
our council, you know, move forward and respond
with management that that makes sense. Mr.
Chairman, I think that's all I have in my notes.
If Chris or Warren have anything else to add, I'd
ask them now if there's I might have missed.

MR. MOORE: I'm good.

MR. ELLIOT: Nothing from me, thanks.

MR. LUISI: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
Chairman.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. We'll move on
to the New England Council.

MR. NIES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
This is Tom Nies. Much like the other councils,
we are continuing to operate. Our five states in
New England are gradually reopening, but each one
is moving and its own pace so it's making things complicated as we start to think about when we might be able to move on to in-person meetings.

Our office is basically closed. All our staff are working from home. Much like everybody else, we've been successfully using webinars to hold our council, SSC, and committee meetings. Our June meeting right now is planned to be a webinar. It will be a three day meeting.

We're a little bit lucky in this is the time of the year where we do a lot of the groundwork for decisions that we make in the Fall so we've been able to keep up with that work, but the meetings may get more complicated as we have to try and take final action.

We've got some council members who have expressed some hesitancy about making controversial decisions during webinar, but it's not clear when we're going to be able to hold another in-person meeting and so, I think at some point we may have to make some of those decisions that way.
John reported about some drops in demand. We've also seen those in the New England area. A lot of fisheries feed the restaurant marked with fresh market and with the closing of restaurants, it's dramatically depressed prices. Groundfish fisherman have their prices drop by at least 25 percent. Scallops prices have kind of stabilized a little, but they also dropped for a while. Our for hire recreational fleet is just starting to get back on the water. Most of the states prohibited them from operating and now some of the states are starting to let them operate on a small level.

Our fisherman and wholesalers are trying to adapt by seeking different outlets to replace the restaurant market with some success and we've had some groups try to wake up with food banks, but I don't think they've been as successful just yet. I believe the USDA had mentioned that they were going to purchase haddock, redfish, and pollock in a significant amount from the Northeast, but I don't believe any of those contracts implemented
yet though we just might not have heard of it.

    We've already started at some of our
advisory panels and committee meetings to ask the
public and committee members what actions we can
take in order to try and mitigate the pandemic and
we expect that we'll consider those ideas at the
June council meeting. That completes what I have
to say, but I believe my Chair, Dr. Quinn, had a
few comments he wanted to make as well.

    MR. QUINN: Thank you very much, Mr.
Nies. We just wanted to end our report with the
tip of our hats in New England to our regional
administrative office led by Mike Pentony and
Assistant Regional Administrator Sarah Bland.
There's been an awful lot of problems with the
work at home and everything and they really pushed
several of our actions to completion in the surf
clam scallop industry so we just wanted to say
thank you them, not just publicly but nationally.
They really stepped up here in these difficult
times so thanks to them. That concludes our
report.
MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, New England Council. We're moving on to Western Pacific. As you may know, we've got four island groups that cover -- comprise the Western Pacific Council, so we're going to start from CNMI. I'm going to ask (inaudible) to provide the COVID-19 impacts for (inaudible). So we'll start with CNMI and then we'll go to Guam, Hawaii, and then I'll end it with American Samoa. Mr. Gourley.

MR. GOURLEY: Okay. Thank you, Archie Soliai. I do appreciate it. The CNMI took an isolations approach and April 1, we basically stopped all flights coming into Saipan. April 2, we stopped interisland flights between Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. There's drastic measures pretty much isolated in us literally and Tinian and Rota had zero cases of COVID-19 infections. Saipan has had to date 21 infections and two deaths. One of the deaths was one of our fish vendors that we were collecting data from. Now, our economy is based on tourism so by stopping the flights, our economy has hit rock bottom. Restaurants are
closed, hotels are closed. There's not a whole lot going on here and so the demand for fish was severely decreased because of the restaurant closures and no tourists. There was established a curfew from 7:00 at night until 6:00 in the morning and boat ramps were all closed except for one and no vessels were allowed to go beyond the reef line. Public beaches and parks were closed. So, basically, the fishing industry was devastated by March the 30th.

People started grumbling. A petition was given to the governor to start opening up a little bit and he did respond so the curfew has gone through two revisions and currently, the curfew now is from 11:00 at night until 5:00 in the morning, which allows our spear fisherman to go out and fish the first part of the night. It allow the boats to leave past the reef to go out trolling. It allows our bottom fisherman to go up to the Northern Islands. Our markets are starting to reopen because they're getting product so things are returning to normal. The amount of
fish coming in is obviously less and the demand is less because we don't have a chore space so that's it in a nutshell. Thank you, Archie.

MR. SOLIAI: We'll move on to Guam.

MR. DUENAS: Michel Duenas here. Very similar to the neighbors up north -- only that our government considered fishing an essential activity so there were no restrictions on fishing, but due to the lockdown, various road closures, hotels and restaurants being closed, there is really no avenue for fisherman to shell fish so basically everyone reverted to subsistence based fishing and sharing within the community and their families so other than restrictions on being able to sell and market their fish, there was basically only subsistent fishing going on in our area.

That's all I have for Guam.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Mr. Duenas.

We'll move on to Hawaii.

MR. WATAMURA: Ed Watamura, Vice Chair from Hawaii. Like they were saying, Hawaii has also suffered because the big driver for our
economy and fishing is tourism and just to give you an idea, last year at the same the daily arrival of visitors was 30,000 per day. Yesterday there were 256 so that dramatic decrease gives you kind of an idea of where were at. So, the demand for fish is way down. Restaurant closures and lack of tourism has really affected the price point for fish and it's made it very difficult for commercial fisherman. Out of 145 active long liners, only 100 of them are fishing. The dockside landings have declined by 80 percent. The amount of fish, the daily average has dropped like 70 percent historically.

So, as you can see, the demand is very low and the price is very low and the fishery is suffering. The charter boat fishing industry has also been shut down. They are required to have a permit and their permits were revoked and until it's reinstated by the governor, it's 100 percent shut down. The non-commercial sector has been trying to take the place of the shut down so the fisherman have joined in on a Facebook page called
Hawaii's Fisherman Feeding Families and the non-commercial fisherman are encouraged to take pictures of their catch and say how many families they've been feeding so April 15 to May 6, it was reported that more than 3,000 pounds of fish were caught and feeding an estimated 7,000 people.

The fishing tourism industry is also shut down because that's basically based on a lot of tourism also. It's a multimillion-dollar industry for our economy. So, things are pretty grim and we're looking forward to more things reopening. As you know, our case count is super low. It's been pretty close to zero for the past week or so. So, hopefully we will see more things opening up. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Ed. For American Samoa, I'm happy to say that the U.S. Soil that the (inaudible) positive team basis and we'll keep that way. As far as the economy is concerned, we do solid business hours and we never had any flights into the island except for once weekly charter flight so the fear is if we open up
the flights then somebody is going to bring the disease to the island so they keep extending it for 30 days and right now they're looking at an extension to June 30.

The government has also reduced their working hours for all businesses. Restaurants, night clubs, bars are all pretty much operating on a skeleton crew, if they open at all. Some of the restaurants are only allowed 10 customers at a time so that's almost not worth to open up, you know, for 10 people.

As far as the fisheries are concerned, our fundamental marine and wildlife resources reduced their government hours so, obviously, it impacts the department's ability to collect data. And, you know, there is an issue currently with, you know, bottom fish data collection and it was determined to be overfished, experiencing overfishing, and that's a great concern for the (inaudible), especially the fishermen. The general consensus is that, you know, the real problem is the lack of data.
As far as the fisherman are concerned, the reduced business hours have obviously impacted their ability to deliver the collection of their fish. Fortunately, the canneries (inaudible) has been designated as an essential employer, so it's going full operation, operating at least in 460-minute increments (phonetic) during this pandemic per day.

Some of the factors that impact the supply chain due to, you know, the cancellation of the flights impacts the vessel's ability to (inaudible), so some of the long liners are tied up (inaudible). But I do want to use this time to thank (inaudible) and the Feds for fishing emergency rulemaking to allow, you know, the fishing fleet to go out without observers. During this COVID-19, we know that section expires on the 31st, but I know that there's been discussion about extending that, so thank you for all the hard work that you do.

So, this cannery is very important because with the impact on the food supply chain
in the production facilities in the U.S., including protein (inaudible) important, not only to American Samoa's (inaudible), but also to the U.S. food supply chain. So we look forward to continuing with (inaudible) fishing during the COVID-19 period. Kitty, did you have anything to add?

I take that as a no. Thank you to all the councils for the update. We'll move on to the next item on our agenda, which is the CARES Act $300 million stimulus package for fishery and aquaculture. Kelly.

MS. DENIT: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon and good morning, everyone. I'm going to step you through three main components of the CARES Act. I think everyone is aware that the CARES Act included 300 million in assistance for fisheries and we've been working as quickly as possible to get that funding out. We were able to announce the allocation of those funds just a couple weeks ago so I'm going to step you guys through how we did the allocation, some of the
eligibility, and then process and then happy to answer any questions that folks have.

So, first, like I mentioned, our overriding goal was to get the funds out as quickly as possible. We used a proportional allocation across all of the coastal states, Tribes, and territories and we were really focused on using readily available total annual revenue information from the commercial, charter, marine fish and shellfish aquaculture, the seafood supply chain including processors and dealers for each state, Tribe, and territory. And we also took subsistence and cultural fisheries into account as part of that.

As you guys know, fisheries can fluctuate from year-to-year so we used multi-year averages to estimate revenue wherever possible. For the most part, we were able to use five year revenue averages for the commercial fish revenues as well as available multi-year averages for aquaculture revenue where that was incorporated in commercial revenue.
In addition, we did an adjustment to that average annual revenue, which is a tongue twister. For Alaska, the Northeast, and Mid-Atlantic states, those were adjusted to attribute landings in those regions to vessel owners state of residence and we applied a similar adjustment to at sea processors on the West Coast. Other fisheries on the West Coast and the Pacific Islands and Southeast and Gulf, we did not do that home porting adjustment because we did not have readily available data to allow us to do that and it also represents a smaller proportion of the total revenue, and would not impact the allocation substantially.

The seafood sector revenues were calculated using our IMPLAN model again using multi-year averages. The IMPLAN model is our input output model that is used in a lot of our economic analysis. Some of you are probably familiar with it. It did include both first line and second line processors as part of that.

For the for hire, we used the five-year
average from the for hire angler trip expenditure survey and as I mentioned, we used a multiplier to account for subsistence and cultural aspects of different fisheries.

There were some exceptions to the multi-year average, but, as I mentioned, for the most part, we were able to use five-year averages across the board from the data streams. We also established a minimum and maximum amount for the allocations including 1 million and 50 million respectively.

In terms of eligibility, we pulled this directly from the CARES Act, which you all likely have seen at this point. So, commercial fishing businesses, charter/for hire businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, as well as processors, the Tribes, we were focused on marine aspects and so, fresh water, Great Lakes operations and Tribes were not included.

Other fish related businesses, there was some flexibility there for states to make determinations around what they want to include
within that fish related businesses. We did draw the line at a certain point, which is really restaurants and retailers to not be included.

And, of course, there are the two main stipulations in the CARES Act. There has to be an incurred 35 percent loss as compared to previous five-year average or any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial fisheries. So, for that revenue loss, determination of qualified (inaudible), territory, or tribe to articulate how they're going to determine that and how they're going to document it. They do not have to use annual comparisons and we've gotten a lot of questions so I'll go ahead and speak to the fact that the fishery does not have to have already occurred. Some states we are hearing are likely to potentially set aside some portion for the allocations for those fisheries who might be starting right now, but which they expect will have a negative impact from COVID and once those fisheries pass that time period, they will be able to demonstrate that they've had this loss incurred
and be eligible for funding or assistance. But that's up to each state to determine and the key there is that the loss has actually occurred so the states cannot use projections as part of those determinations.

So, with that, I'll hit on the process. So, we are working on awards to the Atlantic States, Gulf States, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commissions as well as U.S. V.I. and Puerto Rico. Each of those commissions will work with the state, territory, or Tribes to develop the spend plan for the groups in those specific commissions. And the spend plan is where the specificity on how that 35 percent loss or the subsistence cultural impact will be articulated by those specific groups. It's also where the state or Tribe or territory were explained, how you're going to verify the loss, and, of course, spend plans can include projects other than direct payments if there is tie to COVID. So, once those spend plans are developed and approved by us, then the commissions will be in the position to process
payments to individuals. There is also the flexibility for a state or territory or Tribe to choose to process the payments themselves, but we are anticipating for the most part that the commissions will be the ones to process payments.

There's a few more points and then I'll be happy to answer questions. So, timelines, lots of questions on timelines. The timelines are going to vary by state depending on the development of their spend plan. Many states are using some sort of public engagement to develop their spend plan, which is going to take a little bit more time. The spend plans will then be submitted to the commissions for review. We do expect that review to be quick and we will be moving those reviews as fast as possible. I would highlight the language in the CARES Act that refers to the rolling basis. So, as states are completing their spend plans and those are being submitted, we will be able to review those and then move forward. So, for example, the State of Georgia does not have to wait for the State of
North Carolina or the State of South Carolina to submit their spend plans in order for those reviews to happen and assistance to start getting out the door.

In addition, again, this is another couple questions that we received. Yes, folks are eligible to participate in other assistance programs such as SBA loans or the Payment Protection Plan and still apply for assistance under the CARES Act. The key point here is that they cannot make themselves more than whole so all of those streams together cannot put them above their average revenue from previous years in terms of the assistance received.

And I'll just close by saying we're expecting, of course, a substantial level of oversight in our execution of these funds through the grants and that will flow down to the states and territories so there will be reporting requirements and other things as part of that.

So, Mr. Chair, I'll stop there and would be happy to answer any questions.
MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Kelly. We'll open it up for questions and we'll go in the same order that we went through earlier. We'll start with North Pacific.

MR. WITHERELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Davie Witherell here. I have a question. I'm interested in rationale for having the 50 million dollar cap. It seems kind of arbitrary. It's like my teacher is grading on a curve and even though I got 100, the highest grade in the class is going to be a C. Why the 50 million dollar cap?

MS. DENIT: Sure, Dave. So, I can take a stab at that and then Chris and Paul, please feel free to jump in. I think, as we all know, that the 300 million is not very much in comparison to the overall losses that we are expecting that have experienced across all of the different sectors that are encompassed by the CARES Act and so, we were looking to try and find an appropriate level to set to allow us to provide assistance to as many folks in the best way
possible taking into account the information that we had here, in particular the revenue information. So, Paul or Chris, if you guys would like to add to that.

MR. OLIVER: Well, yeah, I'll add to that, Kelly. This is Chris. Hi, Dave. You know, part of it was the realization of the imperfection, for lack of a better word, the imperfection of the revenue, of course, that we took and the realization that under that approach, it still doesn't take into account whether, in fact, certain fisheries actually meet the 35 percent loss threshold. And when we looked at some initial -- just in terms of equity and looking at, you know, some of our initial numbers before we get home port adjustments would have given the vast majority of the money to two states and we not feel given the imperfection of the revenue approach and the fact that some of those fisheries may not in fact meet the 35 percent loss threshold, that some buffering made sense. And when we redid the numbers actually with the home
porting adjustment, as it turns out, the cap was almost irrelevant. There were only two states that would have exceeded the cap and only by a very slight amount. So, it ended up not being a big factor in terms of how it affected the money. We felt the logic in spreading just in terms of equity across all the different states recognizing the fact that the revenue approach, although it was the most expeditious that we had, it wasn't going to be perfect. So, we felt some type of smoothing factor was appropriate.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Chris. We'll move on to Pacific Council.

MR. TRACY: Thanks. I don't have any questions. Bill, Marc, Brian?

MR. GORELNIK: This is Marc. I've got a question. Can you hear me.

MR. TRACY: Yes.

MR. GORELNIK: Okay, great. My question has to do with a category of other fishing related businesses in the CARES Act and first, you know, I know from looking at the Fishery Economics Report
that a large fraction of the fishery economics, at least in the State of California, have to do with handling imports, and so I'm wondering and my first question is, is the funding limited to the fishing related businesses that are concerned with domestic seafood production or does it also encompass those that deal with imported seafood?

And I have a second question.

MS. DENIT: Hey Marc. Great question.

Thank you. This is Kelly. Yes, seafood businesses that are processing both domestic product as well as product that they have imported are eligible under the CARES Act.

MR. GORELNIK: Okay. Great. And then my second question has to do also under the category of other fishing related businesses. I heard you say that this expressly does not extend to retailers, rather to restaurants and retailers, but I think that that was seafood retailers, not retailers generally, right or was it retailers generally?

MS. DENIT: I'm not tracking what you
mean. What's the different retailer that you're talking about.

MR. GORELNIK: Well, I thought when you talked limitations on CARES Act funding you mentioned that it was expressly not extending to restaurants, which I understood, and then I thought I heard you say also would not extend to retailers. Did I hear that correctly?

MS. DENIT: Yes.

MR. GORELNIK: Okay. So, the reason I asked is that, at least within the recreational fishery, one of the largest portions of the economics of that part of the industry relates to tackle stores and retailers and I had been led to believe that that sector would be entitled to seek funding under the CARES Act and I thought the CARES Act only limited relief to seafood retailers, not retailers generally. And this becomes a particular problem at least in the State of California because the State of California is not considering that sector.

MS. DENIT: No. That's correct, Marc.
Seafood retailer is not included. Bait and tackle operators are eligible and it's up to the state to determine.

MR. GORELNIK: Okay. So, Congress provided that that funding could go there, but states can decide for themselves whether they want to provide that funding. Is that right?

MS. DENIT: Correct.

MR. GORELNIK: All right. Thank you.

MS. DENIT: Sure.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Move on to the Caribbean.

MR. ROLON: Yes, can you repeat who is going to distribute the funding in the U.S.V.I. And Puerto Rico? It's a question that fishermen are asking.

MS. DENIT: Sure, Miguel. Happy too. I believe in Puerto Rico it's going to be the Department of agriculture. In the U.S.V.I., I think it's the Fisheries Agency, but I'll double check and send you an e-mail with that information.
MR. ROLON: Thank you very much.

MR. HANKE: Can you hear me now? Hello?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, go ahead.

MR. HANKE: I finally was able to connect. This is Marcos Hanke. I'm sorry for the delay. I had some trouble with my audio. In terms of Puerto Rico, the Department of Agriculture doesn't have anything to do with the charter industry. I want to also highlight that and to know how it's going to fix or address the charters during this period.

MS. DENIT: Yes, Marcos. The charter industries explicitly highlighted in the CARES Act as eligible and we've communicated that with Puerto Rico, but we'll make sure to follow-up and highlight that and I'll get the points of contact to Miguel so that you have the right folks to get in touch with in Puerto Rico.

MR. HANKE: Thank you very much.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you.

We'll move on to the Gulf Council.

DR. FRASER: Yes, this is Tom Fraser
and, Kelly, I thought you did a really nice job with the overview, but just trying to think, you know, we have a number of questions and trying to figure out where we would direct people to a synopsis I guess of the overview or the process and some of those details and I guess think about putting together, like, an FAQ sheet or something like that.

MS. DENIT: Yeah, Tom. Thanks. Great question. We do have an FAQ actually up on our website right now that lays out the process that I described in terms of the allocations. It also answers many questions around the process moving forward and it has a breakdown by state of the revenues by proportion so there's quite a bit of information on our website and I can certainly share that link with the council EDs to share with you all if that would be helpful for those.

DR. FRASER: Yes, that would be really helpful for us. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. We'll move on to the South Atlantic.
MR. CARMICHAEL: No questions. Thank you, Kelly.

MS. DENIT: Thank you, John.

MR. SOLIAI: Mid-Atlantic.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Kelly, I have a couple of questions for you. We've been getting a lot of questions about the actual allocations and I think, you know, I've been able to explain it relative well, but there seems to be a disconnect between the allocations and revenues and I explained that there's other revenues associated with those allocations, right? So, that's one thing.

The other question that I got that I can answer is why a state like Pennsylvania would get money. My answer is that well they're so poor that there's a minimal amount that went out, but as Pennsylvania indicated that in fact, they're going to spend that money?

MS. DENIT: Yes, Chris, so, you're right on the first point. It is beyond just commercial sector. It includes the charter, seafood sector,
and others. So, yes, that's why you can't just look at commercial revenue to get the allocations. And, yes, the question about Pennsylvania is by far the highest vote getter so far in the CARES Act roll out. So, the answer is they actually have a seafood processing sector and that was what drove their allocation was processing that occurs within state and so, that was how proportionally that fell out in terms of their allocation that it is driven exclusively by a seafood industry.

MR. MOORE: All right. Thank you. I had one quick one too. Once the state gets the money, how long do they have to spend it?

MR. DENIT: Great question, Chris. So, the CARES Act specifies that funds have to be expended by September of 2021, but we obviously are expecting that funds will be expended far in advance of that. So, there is no other deadline in terms of specifically getting the funds out. We do have a checkpoint specifically at the end of August in our grant award condition with the commissions to help make sure everybody is moving
as quickly as possible in particular in developing their spend plans because we know that the need is right now and we want to get the funds out as quickly as we can.

MR. MOORE: Thank you.

MS. DENIT: Yes.

MR. LUISI: Mr. Chairman, this is Mike Luisi and hey, Kelly, how are you? Just a quick question and we can follow-up certainly afterwards. Working for the State of Maryland, I've already had three calls today on the CARES Act so this is a little overkill. But one of the questions that are coming out of the states, specifically in our region, has to do with the dealer data or the federally permitted dealers and the state permitted dealers and were both dealers or both processing facilities, would they have both been incorporated into the allocation formula or were you only using federally permitted dealers for that information or federal processors.

MS. DENIT: I am about 90 percent sure that we included both federal and state, but I
will follow-up and get you to that.

MR. LUISI: Very helpful. Thank you very much. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.


MR. NIES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is Tom Nies. Hi, Kelly, how are you? I have a perhaps an easy question. I've got a couple of questions from state directors wondering where the aquaculture data came from. I'm not familiar with the details of data collection for aquaculture, but some of the states are concerned that it's not really well organized and they are a little unclear about where that came from. And then I've got a follow-up question as well.

MS. DENIT: All right. Yes. Aquaculture. I should have brushed up on that Q&A. Oh, Tom. So, I know we answered a specific question for Rhode Island that we had included the aquaculture data that they were interested in and I will need to -- yeah, we used all the available sources of data that we had. It's the short
version for aquaculture and that was what was incorporated. So, we worked with our --

MR. NIES: Did we lose Kelly? Kelly, are you still with us.

MS. DENIT: Yes, hi. That was not on purpose. No offense, Tom. My wi-fi messed up here at the house. All of a sudden everybody went to yellow triangles and I was like whoa. We used all available sources that we had of aquaculture, Tom.

MR. NIES: Thank you. And then a follow-up and you may have answered this already. Is the information on the web page that you referred, does it give the breakdown by state from how much the revenues were from each sector?

MS. DENIT: Yes, it gives the proportion, correct.

MR. NIES: Thank you.

MS. DENIT: Yes.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. We'll move on to West Pac. Any questions from the Western Pacific?
MR. GOURLEY: Yes, Chairman. I have
some questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Go ahead, Mr. Gourley.

MR. GOURLEY: Yes, hi, Kelly. I've got
some should be easy questions. Can non-U.S.
Citizens prevail of this money?

MS. DENIT: I believe the answer to that
is no. I'm not sure that that one has come up
yet.

MR. GOURLEY: We have businesses that
have non-U.S. Citizen employees and we've also
got fisherman that are non-U.S. Citizens and this
is kind of going to be a big issue for us in the
CNMI so that question kind of pops up immediately
when we're talking among ourselves.

Kind of along with that our, let's see
if the correct political term, undocumented
aliens, are they eligible for the CARES Act?

MS. DENIT: I'm pretty sure the answer
one is no.

MR. GOURLEY: I would agree, but I had
to ask it.
MR. SOLIAI: Not that there are any undocumented aliens.

MR. GOURLEY: Not that I know of, but I just wanted to, you know, kind of clear the air. Kelly, I've got another one. We don't have a lot of documented data for our fisherman. It's kind of sparse. Can we have applicants sign a sworn statement saying that they made so much money and that they incurred a 35 percent loss? Is that something that would be acceptable to NMFS in the spend plan?

MS. DENIT: Yes, it is. Yes, we are aware of data gaps that they just in certain fisheries so, yes, signed affidavits articulating fisheries they were in and the loss of revenue, what was the level of loss can be used, yes.

MR. GOURLEY: Excellent. Last question. We're struggling a little bit to get going so who would be our best POC to get us going on development of the spend plan from the CNMI for this area?

MS. DENIT: Yes, it's going to be Randy
Fisher and Pam Kahunt (phonetic) at Pacific States Commission, but we'll follow-up with them to make sure that they are reaching out to you guys.

MR. GOURLEY: Randy Fisher and Pat --

MS. DENIT: Pam. I'll send you the information. I'll get you the e-mails.

MR. GOURLEY: Fantastic. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. That's all the questions I have right now.

MR. SOLIAI: Anybody have any other questions? I have a question for Kelly. I have actually two questions. How are you going to avoid the double dipping?

MS. DENIT: John, yes, there we go, thank you. Sorry, go ahead or Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: How are you going to avoid double dipping for those industries that may have gotten loans and you can talk a little bit about how much the possible issues with the administrative costs?

MS. DENIT: Sure. So, on the first question, in terms of double dipping, most likely
we are expecting that many of the states and territories and tribes are going to use affidavits asking people to confirm that they are not making themselves more than whole with all of the assistance that they are getting. It's possible that some states will require additional documentation to verify that information, but that will be up to each state and territory to determine exactly what that's going to look like.

In terms of the administrative costs, at this point, as you all might anticipate, we're trying to minimize those as much as possible plus there was a small assessment taken by the agency to support the processing of the grants. Each of the respective commissions is also likely taking a small proportion of the admin in order to process activities and all of the necessary actions in support of getting the funding out, but, again, we're expecting that to be minimal. And the states and territories do have the option to use some of the funding that's coming to them to help them in the development of their spend plan in the
execution of funds if they choose to execute the payments themselves. But, again, we're expecting everyone is going to be trying to take as little as possible. The CARES Act allows up to 2 percent for admin costs, which would be, you know, $6 million and we have zero expectation it will be anywhere remotely close to that.

MR. SOLIAI: Is that your percent across the board for all the councils or does that vary per assessment?

MS. DENIT: That's just what's established in the CARES Act that we could take as much as 2 percent. No one is taking anywhere close to that.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay, great. All right. Thank you.

MS. DENIT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: With there being no other questions, we'll move on to the updates for the minutes. I'll send the floor over to Chris.

MR. OLIVER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I know we're behind schedule so I'll be fairly
brief. I want to talk to talk a little about priorities. Priorities at a 30,000 foot level really. Over the past few months, I think our immediate priorities largely have been determined for us. Obviously, trying to figure out a new virtual operational mode and minimize attacks to our essential mission activities. Protecting our people, making sure everybody is safe. I think, you know, I don't know how long we're going to be in the operational mode, but we're starting to thing more now about how we come out of this in terms of regaining the economics of our fisheries and, you know, supporting a new normal where seafood plays an even bigger role in our economy and I think, you know, the recent role out of the CARES Act funding along with presidential executive order on promoting American seafood competitiveness provides us a really good platform to do that.

We continue, as we've discussed, to work on our market snapshots had efforts led by Michael Eno (phonetic) to help qualify, if not quantify,
sector-by-sector where the impacts are and help (inaudible) where we can make the connections in the supply chain. So, you know, a call for regulatory reform to maximize our fishing opportunities, something the councils have already been working on that speaks to, of course, may common sense restrictions on seafood imports dealing with IUU fishing and importantly, establishes a seafood trade taskforce to deal with some of those issues as they relate to our competitiveness and our supply chains and it places NOAA firmly in charge of the aquaculture permitting process. So, I think it really provides us a good basis to begin addressing some of these long-term challenges because I don't think our primary priorities have changed so much as how we're going to accomplish them and have things that you may need to do differently to accomplish them.

I just want to say that, you know, priority wise, regaining and restoring and amplifying the economic value of our fishing and
seafood industry remains a top priority obviously while maintaining our biological sustainability. As we discussed earlier, one of the biggest impacts that we've had has been to our science mission and our surveys and stock assessments and that remains and I don't need to go rehash all the reasons. I've been amazed at how we've been able to operate at least from a management perspective, you know, opening fisheries, closing fisheries, tracking quotas from a basic management perspective, it's been pretty amazing how well we've able to operate and you've been able to operative virtually to accomplish that. No major eggs have broken there.

On the survey front, yeah, we've got some broken eggs there and, you know, like I said, it's because science and particularly our baseline survey and assessments are one of my very, very, very top priorities and it was particularly difficult and depressing for me to have to go on and make that decision, but I won't rehash all that at the moment. But, you know, I can't
pretend that everything is going to be operating as efficiently and effectively as it did before this situation. Obviously, when we have field research and lab research, some of those things just can't be done the way that we could over the video webinar.

So, as we plan for the rest of this year and next year, I think we, you know, want to continue with our core mission, but we're also going to be looking at some approaches. Our fishing industry and seafood industry has taken a major hit not just commercially, but many of our recreational industries, particular our charter fisheries and we want to take an approach as tailored to offset that impact and regrow those industries.

Promotion of seafood consumption is one approach. We will continued to assess the economic impact of communities in the industry and prioritize actions that support that. We'll work closely with you and state fishery commissions to conduct, you know, as best we can our most time
sensitive and high impact surveys, advance our
fish priority assessments with the existing that
we have when can do surveys, and look at new
technologies in science to augment those surveys.
And, again, those will always be at the top of my
priority list and right now we're having to look
at ways to augment those due to our inability to
execute them with both our white ships and in many
cases, with charter vessels, but I'll speak a
little bit more on that in just a moment because I
think there's an opportunity there.

Support for the seafood supply chain.
As we open back up, we can help stimulate the
supply chain by emphasizing dockside selling
programs. Seafood facility inspections to ensure
that our product quality and safety and
marketability are maximized for work on the
international front to strengthen the global
competitiveness of the industry by improving
access to foreign markets, through trade policy
negotiations, and resolving some of these
technical barriers to imports and I think going
back again to mention that the executive order and the creation of the seafood trade taskforce, which I'm anxious to see get up and running. We'll advocate for U.S. seafood consumption promoted to the public through various communication campaigns. We'll advocate for consumer purchases of U.S. seafood by promoting timely and factual information on the safety and quality and economic importance of U.S. seafood and promote the adventurous models that I mentioned earlier such as support for fisherman and seafood dealers selling directly to the public and in collaboration with the states.

I think we have to look harder at real time cost effective case optimizing cost effective catch data, continue our efforts in electronic monitoring, use artificial intelligence without the need to necessarily increase human observance. This will provide more timely data with the added benefit of opening an additional place for fisherman that may have previously been occupied by an observer. Minor examples, but collectively
important.

I think leveraging, and Cisco talked a little bit about this, advanced assessment technologies, and other data collection that cannot be met with our limited vessel capacity. We will continue to support those advanced technology. Those unmanned autonomous vehicles, cell drones, for example, genetic water sampling. Many of those are in their infancy, but hold a lot of promise.

The last point I'd like to make is opportunities. You know, I've said, since the three years I've been here, I've urged my directors and Cisco to look wherever they can at opportunities for cooperative research for the industry. Part of that builds confidence where certain issues maybe don't have confidence in our numbers and our stock assessments. We need to get some of those fisherman on our boats. We need to get some of our people on their fishing boats and even though we weren't able to execute some recent surveys through charter vessels in lieu of white
ships that we wanted to, I think we need to really
reinvigorate our collective efforts both the
agency and the council looking at these
coooperative research opportunities in where we can
use industry platforms to gather some of the
information that we're unable to gather right now
with our typical platforms.

So, I just want to put an underline on
that and I see there are some of the things that
we can do to fill the gap. So, I don't want to
spend a whole lot more time because I know we're
behind time. I know Paul is going to speak to
more specifically the seafood executive order and
so, I'm going to pass it over to Paul to do that
and I'll be on line listening in as well. If you
have any quick questions, otherwise I'm going to
turn it over to Paul.

MR. DOREMUS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I'm assuming you all can hear me.

MR. SOLIAI: We'll just put a call in
for folks if they have any questions. Paul, would
you mind taking over on the executive order? Is
Paul still with us?

MR. DOREMUS: (inaudible) some basic overviews of that and we have (inaudible).

There's a component that we talked about quite a bit to make sure we're operating as efficiently as possible on the wild capture front and that compliments our focus.

MR. SOLIAI: We can't hear you.

MR. DOREMUS: Okay. Coming through better?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, much better, Paul, thank you.

MR. DOREMUS: It's just getting better access to the signal. Thank you for your patience. Yes, as I was saying, to go back to the kind of core components of the executive order, there's elements on improving wild catch output. There's a strong element on IUU, which compliments work that we've been doing for some time. It kind of puts additional emphasis on collaboration across agencies. We have additional complimentary work around implementing the Maritime Safe Act
that the EO lined up very nicely with. And then, of course, there are sections in the executive order to reduce barriers to aquaculture, improve regulatory efficiency generally. There's direction to lay out aquaculture opportunity areas and to use our relatively new siting tools to help work towards defining aquaculture opportunity areas that have minimal use conflicts with other users so we expect a high degree, a very collaborative process in sort of mapping out potential areas for aquaculture that make sense given the aquaculture requirements, but also given other user requirements in those domains. That's the sort of principle of focus to try to get to areas where we can do the upfront siting and EIS work and reduce barriers to permit seeking activity by folks whether in coastal or in federal waters who would like to operate in any type of seafood farming operation.

And lastly, and also of great interest, is the initiation of a multi-agency seafood trade taskforce that is designed to focus more
comprehensively than has been done to date on trade related interests for the seafood sector as a whole. It relates very heavily to export market promotion, knocking back technical barriers to trade, and dealing more holistically with the seafood industry's trade related international competitiveness needs at the highest level of government. So, those are the major components of the EO and I'll leave it at that.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Paul. We'll open it up for questions or comments. Northern Pacific.

MR. TWEIT: Thank you. Mr. Doremus, I have a question. Actually, I have a couple questions about this. Specifically, on the list of actions that the council is supposed to NMFS relative to reducing the burdens on domestic fisheries and increase production within sustainable fisheries, do we interpret that "and" as both criteria need to be met or is it an "or" so either criteria need to be met?

MR. RAUCH: This is Sam Rauch. I think
we would interpret as an "or." We leave it open to any recommendations by the councils, looking at the particular needs of the industry and, you know, even if you go back to some of the earlier efforts by this administration, I would not think that the councils are particular limited in the things that they could recommend.

MR. OLIVER: This is Chris. I tend to agree. I think we want to look at it as not giving you the greatest flexibility you can the way I look at it.

MR. TWEIT: So, just to follow-up. We are to interpret that request very broadly and things like increased production doesn't necessarily limit it to increase the number of fish that are harvested. It might be increase say the value of the fishery or promotion of different products by processors and are we also limited on just the types of actions that the council and NMFS can take or do we think about promotion seafood in a broader fashion?

MR. RAUCH: So, this is Sam. I think if
you have ideas that beyond your particular of jurisdiction, we certainly would be willing to hear from them and it likely would exceed our ability to respond, but, you know, there is the White House task force, I don't have it right here in front of me, that was going to look at all the things that the council put forward because we don't think government is actually going to do them or have the ability to do them, but if the councils have ideas about things we can do, we will listen to them and look at them even if it is not a Magnuson Act related activity.

And your first point, there are many things the council has done that has not increased the production of the amount of fish harvested, but increased the value of the such vendor rights for fishing, it allows people to bring fish to markets at their own choosing increases a lot of the value without increasing the harvest. So, I think the councils are particularly well suited to provide opinions if you think that those actions are available in the present circumstance, we
certainly are open to hear about it. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. Thank you for the question Northern Pacific. Pacific Council?

MR. TRACY: Yeah, thanks. Yeah, maybe just one statement, one question. So, what I heard from Sam and Chris I would agree. I think a lot of what's in the executive order is kind of what the council does. We do a lot of things to get more fish out of the water and provide more efficient harvesting methods so the profitability of the industry has increased. More opportunity for recreational fisherman. So, that's a lot of what we do anyway. Yeah, I think again one of our big concerns is right now we are finding ourselves limited in our ability to do that just because of the format of the meetings being webinars and as you see, it's easy to get behind in a webinar because we don't move along as efficiently. And so, I guess we need to respond with some plans as to what we're going to do and the timelines for implementing some of these actions that we're recommending. It's going to be more difficult for
us to do that given the situation that we're in right now so I don't know if NMFS had any thoughts about, you know, really it's kind of how the council is going to improve their efficiency given, you know, the challenges we're facing with the COVID situation right now in terms of just, you know, doing the sorts of things that the executive order calls for. I don't know if that's a question or statement, but if you have any response to it, I'd be happy to hear it.

MR. RAUCH: This is Sam. I mean, I think we have tried to work with you and general council to make sure that you can do all the business that you need to do virtually. We can't solve the largest societal dynamics that are going on, but we can do the best we can. We recognize that you can't do everything. Things are limited. I do take some solace in the fact that what the executive order is asking you to do is what you normally do anyway. I mean, much of the council's actions are looking at ways to improve the efficiencies of the fisheries to while your
maintaining sustainability to get as much economic value out of fisheries as you can. And so, there's just some prioritization on that. What the President has asked you, what, two weeks ago is not all that different than we asked you two years ago or last year.

So, we are open. If there are things we can do to help you either in technology or from sort of the legal how to vote kind of thing, I think we're very open to try to fix issues that may arise. We can't solve the broader problem, but I think we want to do what we can to make it as easy as possible for the council to act if we can.

MR. TRACY: That's all I have.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Chuck. Moving on to the Caribbean council. Miguel.

MR. ROLON: I've been trying my Chair if he wants to say something, but we are okay.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. If not, we'll move on to the Gulf Council.
MS. SIMMONS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could you all shed any light on Section 7 regarding the aquaculture opportunity areas. It talks about consultation with Regional Management Councils. Would that be based on permits that are currently submitted to the Army Core and EPA for offshore aquaculture activities? Do you have a good idea what the means exactly and how the councils might fit into that process?

MR. DOREMUS: If the question is around the existing permits that are underway particularly the Velella Epsilon project --

MS. SIMMONS: And Mana Farms as well.

MR. DOREMUS: And Mana as well. Unfortunately, that's a little bit of a technical matter. I guess you would say there isn't a grandfather clause in the executive order as it's written, but we have consulted with the other agencies, with Army Corps, with EPA, and we have all understood that the intent of this order is certainly to not have any applications slow down. And so, the Velella Epsilon project is underway.
I'm not sure about the permit status of Mana. I know that there is certainly intent there, but we will keep our existing relationship with the current processes that are underway in terms of the distribution of responsibilities for the different agencies involved. So, we'll stay on that same path is essentially the bottom line there.

MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Sorry. Can I have a follow-up?

MR. DOREMUS: Of course.

MS. SIMMONS: So, this would be for a new project, but I guess what I'm asking if this involves the council we're talking about areas for siting and it includes a lot of agencies, but also includes and it says within one year we will identify these geographic areas for siting these facilities. Have you all had any thought about how that process might work? Let's say you have two current projects going on that are not in the sited areas that this group comes up with. Do you have some insight on how we're going to move
forward with fulfilling this requirement in two years?

MR. DOREMUS: We're mapping that out now in terms of what the complicated process would look like. There's no requirement that any current or new aquaculture permits be in those opportunity areas. The expectation is that it would certainly facilitate permitting in those areas and make it easier, more accessible, lower cost, faster, but it is not by definition restricted to those areas. So, we'll be trying to figure out essentially where to start and how to do this sequencing of regions over time. There will be some consultation. We're aware of the industry interest in some areas and are trying to base our decisions about where we start based on where we are most likely to see follow on permitting actions relatively readily. So, that's our first step is just looking at where the interest is. We're mapping out what the process would look like in terms of general principles that we would like to see with the consultation
process in any region and that get more regionally specific as we get a more detailed understanding of what the progression of regions will look like, we'll be able to lay that in. So, we're just in the early phases of mapping all that out. The EO certainly gives us direction for this to be a highly collaborative process. That's how we operate intrinsically. So, we'll take that forward and look forward to working with you and others in fashioning a region-by-region approach to the appropriate ways to think through and understand and balance of different views and interests about where the opportunity zones could be best located.

MS. SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DOREMUS: Thank you, Carrie.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. Moving on to the South Atlantic.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yeah, we don't have any specific questions. We do recognize that, you know, with the COVID has been pointed out, as Chuck kind of noted, it is a bit of a challenge
after federal register is sent for our June meeting so we'll be looking at probably one meeting to actually be able to sit down and talk about this to make the deadline of early November so we'll just have to set time to figure out what we can do with that. It will be a stretch, but we have some thoughts in mind for getting through it.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, John.

Mid-Atlantic questions.

MR. MOORE: I don't have any questions.

MR. LUISI: Nothing for me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: Moving on to New England.

DR. QUINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have one question and I think my Vice Chair may have a question as well. In the executive order, I think it says that we should make suggestions for changes to orders, guidance, documents, or other similar agency documents in addition to regulations and the letter we got from Mr. Oliver talks about what will happen with regulatory suggestions that get put on the regulatory agenda
whatever that is called. So, I'm curious how any suggestions for changes in policies or guidance are going to be handled by the agency, where that list is going to be kept, and how we're going to know how those are being addressed.

MR. RAUCH: Yeah, this is Sam. Policies and guidance or not on the same level of massive significance or of binding natures regulations. We do keep a Policy Directive System, which I think is later on the agenda. If the councils have a particular request to deal with it, we certainly will follow-up with that council and let you know how we respond to your request if it is our policy or guidance that you are referring to. If it is someone else's, we will try to reach out to the other agencies. I can't make a commitment about other agency policies, but if it is ours, we will make sure we respond directly to the councils and let you know what the fate of your recommendation is.

MR. SOLIAI: Anything else from New England?
MR. REID: Mr. Chairman, if I might.

This is Eric Reid the Vice Chairman of New England.

MR. SOLIAI: Go ahead, Eric.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to take Mr. Oliver's and cast as wide a net as I can although I have to say it's hard enough for a New Englander to pronounce Papahanamokuakea, so I'm going to defer to the Western Pacific for that, but I'd like to talk about monuments for a moment if I might. In the Atlantic, regarding proclamation 9496, dated September 16, 2016, I can say the council on the authority of MSA should be without question allowed to dictate management measures of fisheries in the monument areas. The proclamation to create the Atlantic monument require that the secretaries in interior and commerce prepare a joint management plan for the monument within three years of the date of the proclamation. That deadline was eight months ago and there's no management plan in sight. However,
fisheries and habit there in should be returned to
the authority of MSA, our deep sea coral amendment
once finalized by NMFS would instantly be capable
of that task. Of course, that effort included
years of development and public stakeholder input
and in fact, only 10-11 percent of the area in the
monument would be available to commercial bottom
tending years. We have a 600 meter maximum depth
for that kind of gear and the Mid-Atlantic has
gear restricted areas for tile fishing in there as
well. The balance of that would be off limits and
commercial pelagic fishing, which has not
interaction with corals, should be allowed or
maybe better put, never have been excluded.

The monuments represent the cost of lost
opportunity to the U.S. fleet and the
infrastructure and markets that support them. The
MSA is the premier act of Congress for management
of the fisheries of the United States and should
be allowed to do so, not an act of Congress from
1906. Hopefully, this body will endorse that
position and our request for support. And I just
want to make a note that this executive order is a topic for our June council meeting, which is coming up and hopefully, we will reiterate this position and our points in the 27 page comment letter we dated June 2017 to Secretary Zinke and Ross and that's my position and I'd like to hear what the CCC has to say about it and hopefully, you may be willing to write a letter of support for that action. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Eric. Any other comments and then we'll move on to the Western Pacific.

MS. SIMONDS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Eric. Yay team. So, I don't have to repeat all these things that Eric said because everything he said is true. So, as you all can imagine, you know, we here in the Western Pacific, we're fishing in our U.S. EEZ's our mostly prohibited because of the marine monument so we appreciate very much this executive order and obviously, we'll be including the monuments as well as other closed areas that are fisherman have
to abide by right now that do not have
conservation as part of the management or, you
know, the wonderful impact.

So, as you see, we've included a letter
that we did write to the President. Last year the
council wanted to write to the President several
times because we had heard in November that a
monument document was on the President's desk, but
obviously, it didn't happen and so, this EO is
very welcomed by us. And in terms of what we're
going to be including in the council's
recommendations, which like you folks we are going
to be discussing this in June and we have a whole
list that includes not just the monument closures,
but other closures including, you know, southern
exclusion zones that is related to the Marine
Mammal Protection Act. So, we're going to have
recommendations on current directives having to do
with protected species and the recusal policy and
those kinds of things. So, you'll see our letter.

So, thank you very much and hi, Nick.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you,
Kitty. And I want to thank Eric also for touching on that proclamation in order for the June 2016 CCC meeting the council at that meeting did send out a letter to President Obama expressing our concerns on these monuments so we'll thankful for the executive order and we're looking forward to it. I think we're the first ones to issue a statement to the council so we look forward to them making a decision. All right we're getting to the end. Why don't we take a five-minute recess?

MR. OLIVER: Hey, this is Chris. Before you take a break, can I make a quick comment?

MR. SOLIAI: Sure, go ahead.

MR. OLIVER: Yeah. Before you leave the EO and the issue of priorities, it just made me think, you know, this is a general comment. I think our top priority right now is to trying to make sure that the wheels don't fall off and if they do fall off, we need to figure out how to put them back on. But beyond that, I think we have a great opportunity to not just recover from this,
but greatly expand the vigor and value of other commercial and recreational fisheries and this executive order has three main pillars that help us do that through aquaculture production, through streamlining the regulatory process for our commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries and our international seafood trade issues. And it's not just tomorrow or the next month or the rest of this year, if we can carry these tools and principles and philosophies forward, I think we really do have an opportunity to come out better on this. So, let's try to end that on a positive note. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Chris. I think we all agree with you. In some regions, we don't have any spare wheels so if one falls off we are going to have to repair it and try to put it back on. On that note, thank you and we'll take a five-minute break. It is about 4:27. We'll come back at 4:33.

(Recess)

MR. SOLIAI: Back on the record. Sam,
are you ready?

MR. RAUCH: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, and Nicholas, I noticed that the Marian Macpherson and Katie Renshaw are in the attendees, if there's a question on this. I'll give their presentation, but they are experts, and, so, if you have a question, you can unmute those two, so we can respond to questions accurately, but, Mr. Chairman, I have a brief NEPA update. We've already talked to the council, each individually, with the CCC, about the rulemaking that's being proposed earlier this year. Obviously, NEPA had the back (inaudible). This is why the councils universally have integrated procedures, where they put out combined documents and use NEPA as a major tool in our decision-making toolbox.

A lot of our spectrums are built around complying with NEPA. It isn't even a provisioned amendment that talks about streamlining two sections together, but there are some aspects of the proposed rule that would apply to the Council. The comment period on that proposed rule, though,
did close on March 10th of this year, and to date the regulation, in fact, does show that CEQ received over one million public comments on the rule. They -- CEQ is currently reviewing all of those comments, and drafting revisions to the proposed rule that indicated their desire to get a final rule out by the end of this calendar year, but they've not yet submitted a final rule to OMB for review. So, we don't have a final rule, yet, to look at, through the inner agency process, and nor do -- can I predict when CEQ may release one, publicly.

So, that is the very brief update, as I said, I have two experts on there that gave presentations to the councils before, if there's specific questions about this or the process, from here on out. So, Mr. Chairman, we'll be happy to entertain comments or questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Sam. All right, we'll open the floor for questions and/or comments under the NEPA, and we will start with the North Pacific.
MR. WITHERELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is what -- what is the Agency's reaction relative to our interest in the functional equivalency? Is that something that NOAA Fisheries also believes, with the assisted council, in addressing the concerns?

MR. RAUCH: Yeah, so, this is Sam. I do believe the functional equivalency. There are -- so, first all, it was a -- it's a proposal. So, it remains to see what's in the final rule. If the proposal is finalized, I do believe there is a -- there are arguments that the Magnuson Act process would meet the kind of process envisioned for that, and that we would work with councils to try to explore that, but it's a little premature, given that that was a proposal, and we have yet to see what is in the final rule.

MR. OLIVER: Yeah, David, this is Chris, and I was going to recuse myself on any NEPA discussions, but, well, I guess we'll see how this turns out, but, you know, I've been interested in that particular topic for a long, long time.
MS. SIMONDS: 30 years.

MR. RAUCH: Well, any support you can
give us for -- we'll get that through, and if this
rule gets reviewed by your Agency, you have an
opportunity to comment, we'd appreciate you.
Well, thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. Move forward to
Pacific Council.

MR. TRACY: Yeah, thanks. Well, I think
I probably got the answer to my question, right
there, but we are also very interested in this
issue, have been, on record, supporting something
like this. Functional equivalency, there was, in
the proposed rule, there was a note that the
agencies would be responsible for developing
guidelines to establish functional equivalency.
That doesn't sound like that's going to occur,
until after the rule is final.

So, that was kind of my question, but,
again, I think, just to echo Dave's comments, you
know, to the extent that we can help in that
process, for during or after publication of the
rule, we are very interested in seeing this move forward.

MR. RAUCH: Yeah, just to confirm, we would not be doing any guidelines, until after the rule is final, and we can understand what the actual requirements turn out to be, if any.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. All right, let's move on to the Caribbean.

MR. ROLON: Can you hear me? That's okay it was covered by David's question. So, he answered.

MR. SOLIAI: Miguel, you don't have any questions?

MR. ROLON: No, the same question that David was talking about, so it was well covered.

MR. SOLIAI: Oh. Okay, all right, thank you. Gulf Council?

MS. SIMMONS: I don't have any questions. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Carrie. South Atlantic?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Nothing further, thank
you.

MR. SOLIAI: Mid-Atlantic?

MR. MOORE: No questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: New England?

MR. NIES: In what is probably a surprise, no questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Tom. All right, West Pac?

MS. SIMONDS: I know the questions, which is to say that we been behind Chris for over 20 years on this NEPA issue. So, hopefully it's going to be resolved.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay, so, I'll keep my fingers crossed. Mr. Gourley?

MR. GOURLEY: Yes, Sam, do you -- after the final rule is published, do you envision, or do you have an idea of whether NMFS is going to hop right on implementing the proposed rules, or do you -- is -- will there be a timeline, where it will have to be implemented, or do you envision it possibly dragging out for a long time? What's
your opinion?

MR. RAUCH: Yes, thank you. Just bear in mind that there are a number of things in the proposed rule that are different then the functional equivalency, and a lot of those things would apply immediately, or under whatever effective date CEQ puts them, and, so, I certainly think that NEPA processes, going forward, from the effective date, you would have to comply with the new requirements, whatever they are.

There are things in the proposed rule with similar effects, but other kinds of things that we will have to deal with, but to the extent that there is an option for apply for or determining that the Magnusson Act process is a functional equivalent, we will have to see what the final version is of that. I imagine we will work as expeditiously as possible to prove whatever CEQ process is laid out to do that, whether that is a process that we're in control of, or whether we have to go to CEQ. This is something that we're going to work expeditiously
for, if this remains in the final rule, but I just want to be clear, there are other aspects of the rule, to be finalized, that are likely going to be -- take effect immediately, and we will have to start applying those to any new NEPA document that follows on.

MR. GOURLEY: Basically, we are just kind of have to wait to see what's in the final rule.

MR. RAUCH: There was a million comments on the final rule. So, it was conceivable to the equation, that there could be significant changes, but I won't know until -- until we see it.

MR. GOURLEY: Thank you, Sam.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you, and, so, moving on. The next item on our agenda is the offshore wind issue. Sam's suspended. Candace?

MR. RAUCH: We're going to have Candace respond to that.

MS. NACHMAN: Hi, thank you, and, Nicholas, could you please make me a presenter, so I can share my screen?
Hi, good afternoon everyone, and good morning to those of you outside of the East Coast.

For those of you who don't know me, or haven't worked with me before, I work in the NOAA Fisheries Office of Policy, and cover offshore wind as one of my primary topics, and, today, I'm going to tag team this presentation with Mike Pentony and John Hare, as well.

I just want to make sure, are you all able to see the presentation? Yes?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes, thank you.

MS. NACHMAN: Okay, wonderful, thank you. NOAA is involved in Offshore Wind Development, both from a statutory regulatory standpoint, and also from a science and research standpoint. NOAA Fisheries is the primary part of NOAA involved in offshore wind development projects.

We support the administration's efforts to advance offshore renewable energy, through our participation in offshore wind development regulatory and statutory processes, such as the
Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Magnuson Stevens Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and NEPA.

We realize this is a new industry to U.S. waters, and we still do not fully understand how these offshore wind farms will impact fishing operations, protected species, essential fish habitat, and our ability to complete surveys and assessments. We are working cooperatively with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, BOEM, the Federal Agency with statutory responsibility, to develop the outer continental shelf, or OCS, to evaluate those impacts through our statutory and regulatory processes, as well as with Federal and State Agencies, the fishing and wind industries, and others to conduct collaborative regional science in an effort to support the coexistence of sustainable fisheries and offshore wind farms.

Currently, BOEM has issued 16 offshore wind leases, covering more than 1.7 million acres, all of which are located between Massachusetts and
North Carolina. At this time, there are no active leases in any other OCS waters. While efforts to develop U.S. offshore wind are furthest along in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region, BOEM is beginning to ramp up efforts in other regions.

BOEM is moving forward with wind energy planning efforts on the OCS, in several regions, including the New York Bight Area, which represents an area of shallow waters, between Long Island, to the north and east, and the New Jersey coast, to the south and west, also, in Central and Northern California, specifically in the Humboldt Bay, Morro Bay, and the Diablo Canyon Areas, in an area designated as Carolina Long Bay, which represents lease areas, potentially located off Georgetown in Horry County, South Carolina, and to adjacent Brunswick County, North Carolina, and also the Gulf of Maine.

Additionally, BOEM reinitiated discussions of the Oregon Renewable Energy Inter-Governmental Task Force, last year. To address the amount and pace of projects in Mid-
Atlantic and New England waters, we established a Regional Wind team, comprised of experts in fisheries policy, habitat, protected species, scientific assessment and survey operations, and social science analysis to help us review projects, evaluate potential impacts to our trust resources, and contribute necessary expertise into the process.

These staff are working tirelessly to prepare for the evaluation of the numerous planned and proposed projects, throughout the greater Atlantic Region. Additionally, we are beginning conversations with staff on the West Coast, to determine how we can best prepare, as BOEM begins the process of evaluating wind energy areas in that region. It is important to include fisheries information in the analysis of any type of ocean use, such as offshore wind or aquaculture. However, as noted by Paul, in his remarks earlier this afternoon, or this morning, regarding the new Seafood Executive Order, aquaculture siting would go through a different process than the one for
offshore wind.

NOAA had developed several tools to assist in those aquaculture siting decisions.

Next, you'll hear from Mike Pentony, our Regional Administrator for the Greater Atlantic, and he will discuss the fisheries information we shared with BOEM, to assist them in their analysis of the Vineyard Wind Project. This project would be located approximately 14 miles offshore Massachusetts. After Mike, Jon Hare, the Director of Our Northeast Fisheries Science Center, will discuss the potential impacts to our fisheries and protected species surveys, from the existence of offshore wind farms.

I would now like to turn the mic over to Mike.

MR. PENTONY: All right, thank you, Candace. Good afternoon everybody, or morning, if it's still morning where you are.

So, as Candace said, I'm Mike Pentony, the Regional Administrator for Greater Atlantic Regional Office, and as you saw in the previous
map, and as you can see in these two maps, which show of our region from the Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in the left, to, and then on the right, the map is kind of zooming in on Long Island, New York, down through the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and you can see each little colored area is a different wind lease area.

Now, I'll point out, just kind of focus for the initial couple slides, on the one on the left, there, right in the middle, it's kind of a brownish color, labeled Vineyard Wind, it runs northeast to southwest. That's the one that our team has been working on, primarily, over the last couple of years. It's really the precedent setting project, that BOEM has been working on with us, and other agencies, but as you can see, there are a number of other projects that are in the pipeline, of both off the coast of Massachusetts there, along with Vineyard Wind, all the way down the coast to North Carolina, and as you can see, off the coast of New Jersey, and Long Island, New York, there are number of projects, as
well.

So, just kind of keep those in mind, as I move through the slides. What I'm going to do is kind of walk you through different sources of data, that we've used to assess and understand -- try to understand the potential impacts that these wind projects might have on our fishing industry and fishery resources. So, if you can go to the slide, please. I'm not seeing an advanced cabinet. Are you advancing? There we go, thank you.

So, you know, one obvious source of information are our vessel trip reports. All of our commercial fisheries and some of our for hire fisheries are required to submit a vessel trip report, for every fishing trip that they take, and in this area, which is highlighted, and shows that Vineyard Wind Area, in red, off -- this is off the coast of -- Southern Coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Every green dot on that map is a single fishing trip, and it's the location reported on their vessel trip report.
Now, there's two things to understand about that. One, each fishing trip is only required to submit a single location, usually a lat-long, that encompasses, in broad terms, the area which they fish. Now, it doesn't really reflect all the fishing activity that occurred on that trip. It's simply a point reference, for each trip. So, it masks a lot of information about those fishing trips.

You can also see we have some reliability challenges, as there are quite a few green dots that show up on land. So, Vessel Trip Report data, alone, are not necessarily the best source of information for understanding the impacts of these wind project, but there are some things that we can do with the Vessel Trip Report Data. So, next slide, please.

In this case, this is an example of some data analysis we've done, where we've taken the Vessel Trip Report Raw Data, and generated some heat maps, and broken it out by either gear type or vessel size, to try to see -- look for patterns
of fishing activity, and, so, now, here, in these
two maps, on the left side, it's -- is dredge
gear, off the coast off the Mid-Atlantic, and on
the right side it's a bottom troll of vessels
larger then 65 feet, of fishing activity in the
same area, and you can see with the heat maps, you
can distinguish some high hotspots for the
different gear types, and how those hotspots may
or may not overlap with the proposed wind areas
that are there shaded in those areas, with the
boxes.

So, that's one opportunity for us to
analyze and use those vessel trip report data.
Next slide please. But another really important
source of information about fishing activity is
our Vessel Monitoring System Data. So, this is
just a raw data dump of all the VMS Data that we
have, and plotting it out, and you can see,
because the vessel monitoring system data are
showing vessel tracks, it's a much -- there's much
more data than simply a single dot per fishing
trip, but, again, it's hard to understand what
might be happening in any given area within here. So, we have to look at the VMS Data, and think about what we can do with it, to better understand and draw some conclusions. To the next slide please.

This, actually, is just a map to show -- kind of show some comparisons between the VMS Data and the VTR Data. If you look on the right, this is, again, it's the heat map of vessel activity, using dredges, in the Mid-Atlantic, and you can compare that to VMS Data for scallop fishery. Now, the dredge data encompasses both scallop fishing and clam fishing. The scallop data is just scallop fishery, but you'll see that there are some hotspots using VMS Data, that are completely missed in the VTR Data. They are right off the coast of New Jersey, and then down south a little bit. So, we really kind of focused in on how we can make best use of the VMS Data, to understand the potential impacts of wind on our fishing activity. The next slide, please.

One of the really nice things that we
can do with VMS Data is we can -- we can filter the data, based on speed. So, if we know how, you know, if we see a ping in the VMS Data, and an hour later there's another ping, we can obviously calculate the speed the vessel had to have been going, on average, between those two spots, and we generally interpret the speeds above four knots as transit, and speed of four knots or below as fishing activity. So, this shows you some of the transit maps, that we were able to generate, based on using the speed filter.

And transiting is really important, as we learned, as we went through the Vineyard Wind Project, because of the orientation and the design of the project, how far apart the turbines are placed, the orientation of the turbines, whether there are, in fact, transit allies, if you will, in and among the turbine display. It can have a significant effect on the vessel transit, to get out to the fishing grounds, and be able to return safely home.

Next map. Thanks. So, this is an
example of how we can, again, take the data, the VMS Data, break it out by species, fishery, and then show both the transiting that occurs, as well as the fishing activity, and, so, by filtering the fishing activity, as I mentioned, based on speed, and coloring that, and generating a heat map, we can then show that on top of the transit, to understand both the fishing activity impacts, as well as the transiting impacts on the various fisheries. So, on the left side, you're seeing some of our ground fish fisheries, and on the right side, you're seeing our squid fishery. Next map.

Another interesting thing that we are able to do with the VMS Data is -- if you look at the dot plot on the left, it's showing all vessel activity and the orientation, the direction of the vessel movement, and it looks like, from that map alone, that all of the vessel traffic is moving kind of northwest to southeast, but when you distinguish vessel transiting, from vessel fishing, which are the two maps on the right, or
the two plots on the right, you can see a very different pattern. Clearly, the transiting is occurring predominantly on northwest to southeast, but the fishing activity, as you can see, is actually happening much -- over a much broader area. In fact, most of the fishing activity, if you were to draw a conclusion, you could say, is directly due east-west, based on that's where the highest peaks are.

So, understanding both direction of travel, both for fishing activity and transiting, is an important feature to understanding the impacts of potential wind project and design parameters on that project, on fishing activity. The next slide, please.

Lastly, we can marry our VMS Data with our Socioeconomic Data, to get a clearer picture of the impacts, the economic impacts of fishing activity in an area, and, so, this is just a -- one example in the Vineyard Wind Area, and looking at the revenue from the most highly impacted or affected Fishery Management Plans, and the big bar
in the middle is 2016. So, this is both showing which fisheries were most significantly impacted, but also the temporal components, and the variability, interannual variability.

So, what you see is that, for the Mackerel Squid and Butterfish Fishery, which is the darkest red there, that is the biggest revenue driver, they had a really big year in 2016, but it was less so, in that specific area, in the years, both, the two years prior, and the two years after, and, so, understanding those impacts and the variability of the impacts, is important to get a really good -- a clear sense, and a clear picture of the impacts or the potential impacts of the wind area, on our fisheries. And, then, the last slide.

So, while this is all really good, and it's been really useful to dig into these data sets, to try to draw some conclusions and provide some information for BOEM to consider, in their analysis. There are some really important caveats, at least on the East Coast. We don't
have VMS on all of our fisheries. So, while we can do some really interesting analyses and data products, based on the VMS Data, it's limited to what fisheries actually have VMS, and even those fisheries that do have VMS, in some cases, the time series is somewhat limited, and, so, we may not be able to get a really good time series, or a clear picture over time, of how important those areas may be, and, while VMS Data is definitely more precise than vessel trip report data, even one-hour ping rates, which is what we have for most of our fisheries, mean that much data is still lost, in terms of what happens on those fishing trips, in between those hour pings.

And, then, the last thing, where we are doing some marrying of economic data to our VMS Data, and our Vessel Trip Report Data, the economic data are not reported on a haul by haul basis. So, we do have to make some inferences about the impact of a trip, overall, while recognizing that, within a trip, there can be some really important differences and distinctions
between the first haul and the last haul, where those hauls may be, and the economic importance to the vessel of those, of those differences.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll lead it off, and I'll turn it over to John Hare, for the talk about our survey impacts.

MR. HARE: Great, thank you very much, Mike and Candace. Can you go to the next slide, Candace, and I think I'll just keep it on this one slide, and just try to move through this quickly, because I appreciate that we're running late.

So, when we think about these large-scale construction projects, you know, it's sort of ecological, and ecosystem rebel questions come to mind, first.

How will construction noise affect marine mammals? How will wind turbines effect habitat and effect fish abundance? How will changes in down stream current effect productivity and feeding? And these are the questions that generate the most interest, but when we look at the sort of scale of offshore wind development, in
the northeast, at the Science Center at the
Regional Office, and the New England Council, and
the Mid-Atlantic Council, The Atlantic States
Marine Fisheries Commission, we've been asking
ourselves, how will this development effect our
scientific surveys, and the management and science
products that are generated from these surveys,
and, so, in the northeast, you know, we've started
looking at this question in much more detail. We
really sort of started in April of 2019. There
was a meeting at New England Fisheries Management
Council, which sort of went through all the
issues, and we came to the realization that a
number of our surveys are going to be impacted by
offshore wind development, and these include our
spring and autumn bottom troll survey, our sea
scallop survey, our Atlantic surf clam and ocean
quahog surveys, our ecosystem monitoring surveys,
our North-Atlantic right whale aerial surveys, our
other marine mammal, and sea turtle ship-based and
aerial surveys. So, the -- we have a number of
surveys that are going to be impacted, are large.
If floating technology starts to develop in the Gulf of Maine, which is, you know, the sort of the start of the process, with their first taskforce meeting, our Gulf of Maine Longline Survey, and our Northern Trip Survey, will also likely be impacted.

But we look at this long list of surveys, it accounts for about 300 -- more than 300 years' worth of survey effort, and these surveys are supported by dedicated NOAA ship and aircraft resources, and a number of highly trained staff, and represents some of the most comprehensive data, on Marine ecosystems in the world, and these data are used in a number of fisheries, stock assessment, and protected species stock assessment.

So, we are realizing that the impact on our ability to do our science could be quite large. You know, you think about the issue, most of our current survey methods could not be done in a wind energy development, so, our current survey methods are going to be excluded. We also -- you
know, there's a lot of reason to believe that animal distribution and abundance will be quite different in wind energy areas. So, we are going to need to sample both inside wind energy developments, sample outside wind energy developments, and figure out some way to calibrate those survey data.

If we don't address this, the loss of survey information required for fisheries and protected species managers would likely lead to greater uncertainty in our assessments, which could have adverse impact on fishery participants and communities, as well as impacts on our ability to recover and conserve protected species.

So, at the Northeast Science Center, working with the Regional Office, and the two councils, and the commission, we're thinking about working to mitigate these impacts on our surveys, sort of in four parts. One is to evaluate the effects on our surveys and the changes in our survey design, on how this would impact our -- the management advice that we provide. We're also
looking at using existing data sets, to develop additional survey indices to form a bridge between this pre-construction and post-construction period.

We're looking at evaluating and developing new survey technologies that we can use within wind energy areas, and then, also, the need to calibrate these new methods with our current method, which could be used outside of wind energy areas, and then we fully realize that we need to work collaboratively, in a coordinated fashion, because there are a lot of surveys in the region, NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fishery Science Center does some, a number of states are performing surveys, and then each wind energy development area will have its own monitoring plan, and, so, if we are able to work collaboratively, in a coordinating manner, we will be able to, sort of, bring all of these data to bear and assessment issues, as opposed to having 18 different wind energy development areas, monitoring their own, sort of, using their own technics, developing
their own data standards, and not being to, sort of, expand that up to a regional level.

So, we are currently working with the Bureau of Offshore Energy Management, to have a conversation about these impacts on our surveys, and how we're going to mitigate them. It -- we -- you know, it appears that we are going to get some limited funding from BOEM, this fiscal year, to begin to address these survey impacts, and we're in the process of finalizing an inter-agency agreement with them, and, so, there are, you know, substantial impacts, on our ability to do our science, as a result of these wind energy developments, and these are not the impacts on the species that we are providing advice for. These are impacts on our ability to provide that advice.

So, I'll turn it back over to Candace. Thank you.

MS. NACHMAN: Thank you, Mike and Jon. I would just like to end our remarks by noting the 10 year memorandum of understanding, that we signed in the spring of 2019, with BOEM and RODA, the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance,
that brings local and regional fishing interests together, with Federal Regulators to collaborate on the fish -- on the science and process of offshore wind energy development, on the Atlantic OCS. This MOU will help us achieve our strategic national goal of maximizing fishing opportunities while supporting responsible resource development.

Although this MOU initially focuses on the Atlantic, the MOU does not preclude broader implementation, and there is the opportunity to expand application to other OCS regions, as offshore wind development progresses in those areas. While there are still gaps in our knowledge about how the installation of wind turbines may impact our fisheries, protected species, and their habitats, we support the establishment of a Regional Scientific Research and monitoring framework, to better understand cumulative impacts, and potential future interactions with fisheries, protected species, and offshore wind.

The responsible Offshore Science
Alliance, or ROSA, which launched in spring 2019, is an important step in helping us realize this goal of a Regional Scientific and Monitoring Framework.

I know many of you are concerned about the pace and potential scale of offshore wind development, but I want to assure you that NOAA Fisheries will continue to provide expertise and advice to BOEM, to avoid areas of important fishing activity and sensitive habitats, and to help minimize impacts to fisheries, protected species, and their habitats, and, with that, we'll say thank you, Mr. Chair, and have you open it up to questions.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you. We'll open it up for questions, right now, and we'll start with North Pacific.

MR. WITHERELL: No questions.

MR. SOLIAI: No questions from North Pacific? Move on to the Pacific Council?

MR. TRACY: Yeah, thanks, I got a couple questions and comments here. Maybe I'll kind of
start at the end, and I had heard you say, Candace, that NMFS would make sure and look out for, you know, it backs to the resources. I guess I'm just wondering, you know, I think the councils would like to have some input on that, as well. So, you know, I guess what are the plans for including the council on some of the decisions about -- or discussions about impacts on fishery resources?

MS. NACHMAN: All right, yeah, I can start the answer, and if others want to jump in. Thank you for the question. So, BOEM has set up inter-governmental task forces. They have 15 established around the Nation, including on the Pacific Coast for California, and for Oregon, and, so, that is one way for stakeholders to get involved in the process.

I also know that BOEM will come to council meetings, in both New England and the Mid-Atlantic. They have presented many times, over the last couple of years, to allow for discussion with them on the topics, and I know
that we also interact in them. Jon or Mike, I
don't know if you want to expand, about how things
have gone with the Mid-Atlantic or New England?

MR. HARE: Yeah, yeah, I'll just expand
a little bit. You know, we have a wind energy
team, Science Center and Regional Office, and we
include -- there's council staff, in New England
and Mid-Atlantic that are on that team as well,
and, so, it's very close coordination between NOAA
Fisheries and the Council Staff in the region.
The Mid-Atlantic Council hosts the wind energy
site webpage for the region. So, this is close
coordination between Fisheries and the Council. I
don't know if Tom and -- Tom or Chris Moore -- Tom
Nies or Chris Moore want to comment on sort of how
we interact.

MR. TRACY: Well, maybe I'll just --
I've got a couple of other questions, maybe I'll
move through those, and then Tom and Chris can
speak to it, when they -- when their turn comes
around. I did hear the word mitigation used in
terms of mitigating the impacts on the surveys.
I'm just curious what the situation is for mitigating habitat effects, or loss to fisheries. You know, I'm right here on the West Coast, and, of course, mitigation from energy development, in the terms of hydropower development, is a big issue, and a sensitive issue. I'm just wondering what's being done, in terms of mitigation by wind energy companies, for offshore development?

MR. SOLIAI: Mike, do you want to -- you want to try to answer that?

MR. PENTONY: Well, I can try. It's -- we don't have a lot of experience yet, but we're aware that BOEM has worked with the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and with the developers. It was a developer for Vineyard Wind. They have put together some mitigation proposals, where they've done some assessments about the economic -- expected economic losses from primarily the fishing industry, and they've put together the proposals and work with the states on those.

We tend to be not directly engaged in
that, those conversations, between the developers and the states, but we're available to provide any information that we have available, that we can share with them, on -- to help with that process.

MR. TRACY: Thanks, then one -- maybe one more for you, Mike, regards to all the fishing effort information and VMS Data and VTR Data. I notice the time series on those. Of course, VMS is not a -- you know, it hasn't been around that long, but, you know, most of the time, series are fairly short, I guess, and I saw -- presented theirs from around 2011 to '15 for trip reports, '15 and newer for VMS Data. So, I guess we've -- we have some concerns on the West Coast. Our -- for example, our Groundfish Fishery, we've had Rockfish Conservation Areas in place for, you know, a long time, 15 or more years, and using such short data sets would, you know, be problematic for us, because we just, you know, we've rebuilt all the overfished stocks, or nearly all of them, and we just played a regulatory process to reopen those areas to fishing, that
have been closed for, you know, a couple decades, and, so, our concern is that the database, that might be used by BOEM, for sighting wind energy areas, or for that matter, aquaculture, offshore aquaculture, may not reflect what we expect to be the effort patterns going forward, starting in January 2021, when all those areas reopen to fishing.

So, what data sets are used and who maintains those and who verifies them? And is there any opportunity for the councils to weigh in on what data is used in the siting databases and siting criteria?

MR. PENTONY: Thanks, Chuck. Well, there's a couple of different issues I want to try to address. One is -- what I showed in my presentation were really just examples of the data that we are using.

So, for example, our vessel trip report data go back way -- much, much earlier than what was displayed on the maps that I showed as examples. Some of our fisheries have a longer
history with VMS than others, and some of those
data sets are quite extensive on VMS, but it
really is fisheries -- fishery dependent.

I also think that what we're -- what
we're focusing on, from NMFS, is working with
BOEM, to understand the impacts of their proposed
wind areas. So, we are heavy engaged with BOEM in
the review of their NEPA document. We are a
cooperating agency with BOEM, and, so, we are
looking at drafts of their EISs and working with
them to ensure that they have available to them
the best data, and the most comprehensive data
sets available, and an understand -- this is
really key, an understanding of how to interpret
the data, and apply the data correctly at the
various scales, that they are looking at doing
analysis for, and, so, we're working -- and really
focused on working with BOEM, on making sure they
have those data, available for their NEPA
Analysis.

That's very different from BOEM making
the siting decisions, I guess, if you will, are
happening on a different time scale, and there's a
different process. Because we're not directly
engaged with BOEM, as we are on the NEPA side,
we're not as involved with BOEM, on the siting
decisions. Candace may want to speak to that,
but, you know, over the last couple of years,
we've worked very closely with BOEM, to develop a
strong working relationship, primarily around
Vineyard Wind, and understanding the data, giving
them access to the data, and understanding how to
interpret the data correctly, given what it was
showing.

One, just quick, example, I think,
initially, when we got a look at their -- one of
their early drafts of an EIS, they had relied very
heavily on vessel trip report data, to assess what
fishing activity was happening in an area, and we
pointed out that the scale of which they were
looking was really not appropriate to apply the
VTR data. So, that's when we started engaging in
conversations with them around the VMS data, and
applying the correct speed filters, to distinguish
transiting from fishing activity.

MR. TRACY: Yeah, I think our major concern are that -- it's just, you know, the data that they use in the first place, you know, be the best available data, and not, you know, not have to make that correction later, once the NEPA document has been drafted, and those sorts of things, just to get, you know, just to kind of get in the early in the process, and, you know, determine what data sources they have -- they are using. So, that was -- that's our main concern.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Chuck.

MR. TRACY: Yep.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, appreciate it.

I do want to remind you, before we move on to Caribbean, I do want to remind council that we are strapped for time, with this, still got a lot of more agenda items. So, please try to restrict your questions, and move as fast as possible. We'll move on to the Caribbean.

MR. HANVE: I don't have any comment at
this time, thank you. This is Marcus.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you. The Gulf Council?

MS. SIMMONS: No comment, thank you.

Good presentation.

MR. SOLIAI: South Atlantic?

SPEAKER: No comment, thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, Mid-Atlantic?

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a brief comment, just in response to Jon's point. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Council is heavily involved, maybe heavily is probably too -- too strong, we're definitely involved, and wind energy, and all the issues associated with wind energy development on the East Coast, including making a joint website with GARFO, sending out notices to mariners, we have email lists, we have -- we do a lot for the related wind energy bill, but it comes down to, you know, a basic question, when you think about wind energy developing on the East Coast, and that is, why are the councils involved?
So, if you listen to the presentations today, you get the -- there was a heavy emphasis on, and I appreciate the presentations, so, there was a heavy emphasis on assessing impacts of energy development on the East Coast. So, if you think about it as an assessment, what about the potential for minimizing those impacts, and how can the Council and NMFS be involved in that particular process? And that's the struggle that I've had in my conversations with BOEM, which is, basically, these boxes have been developed, they're in the ocean, you're not going to move the box, so, potentially, you know, we can talk about the placement of these turbines within the box. But even that conversation becomes somewhat strained because they want to put turbines in the entire box.

So, there's our struggle, on the East Coast, relative to the wind energy development, so, I'd be curious to see how it proceeds on the West Coast, you know, and how those (inaudible). Thank you.
MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you, Chris. We'll move on to the New England Council.

MR. NIES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll try and be brief. You know, mention was made of the Regional Intergovernmental Task Forces, and this creates a little bit of an issue for the councils. We try to participate in the Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Task Force to the extent we can. One of the problems is that, because of FACA restrictions, the only way you can actually be a member, is if you have one of your state directors serve on the Intergovernmental Task Force.

This creates kind of a conflict because many of the governors of those states are gung ho on wind energy, and really do not give a lot of weight to fishing industry concerns, and, so, it's difficult for us to put a state director in the position of serving on the task force, and not coming into conflict with our governor, when the New England Council may have a different position on the impacts of fishing.
Now, I will say that BOEM has been relatively willing to let us participate in sort of an advisory capacity, and our staff tends to do that. But since the definition of a federal agency under FACA and the definition of a federal agency under FOIA seem to be very similar, I was baffled why that definition works for us under FOIA, but it doesn't work for us under FACA.

Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Tom. Moving on to West Pac.

MR. WATAMURA: Yeah, hi, this is Ed Watamura, Vice Chair, Hawaii. HFACT, the Hawaii Fisherman's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition, which shows a part of -- met with the companies that were developing proposals for offshore wind farms, off of the coast of Honolulu, and Kaena Point. After listening to their plans, describing the scope of the projects, we had some concerns.

Number one, the floating windmills were quite large, and numbered 50 plus at each site.
These -- number two, these structures would act as FAD, Fish Aggregation Devices, and we felt that the annual migrational pattern of yearly Ahi run would theoretically be compromised. Number three, the schools of fish, that these FADs would attract, would also attract sea birds, in large spinning windmills would potentially be a danger to them. Number four, Hawaii, especially Oahu's once pristine reefs, have undergone countless destructive disturbances to the near shore ecosystem, caused by humans. The undersea cables that would be required to bring in the electricity from the wind farms would be yet another destructive element to the near shore environment, and, lastly, number five, Hawaii is paradise, that is why we have so many tourists, and an economy that is based on tourism. A large part of this paradise is a beautiful scenery that is our treasure. Imagine staying in one of our hotels, looking out at the incredible blue ocean, and huge windmills. This is a visual blight that we do not need. Thank you.
SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Sorry, I was on mute.

Thank you, Ed. Nick -- offshore wind issues.

Now, we'll move on to this item before -- before I move on, I want to make an announcement. To those of you on the WebEx, members of the public that are interested in making public comments, at the end of the day, please send a private chat to Nicholas Pieper. He's listed as the host -- with your name and affiliation. Please send in your requests for public comment before the public comment session begins, and in the interest of time, I would ask that you please keep your comments under three minutes. All right, thank you.

So, we'll move onto the next item on the agenda. That's the Status of Policy Director. Kelly, the floor is yours.

MS. DENIT: Great, thank you, Mr. Chair, and Nicholas, I think, is going to blow up his screen to share. Thank you, Nicholas. So, the CCC will recall -- this request started a
little while ago, and you all were interested in having a living document that would show you, in a snapshot, what all was out for comment, from the Councils, and provide a little bit of detail on who contact, when the due date was, and some basic information. So, we've put together this Google spreadsheet, that we would plan to share with the Council EDs, to allow you to see what's out, when it's due, and who you need to follow-up with, if you do have specific comments. That's really all I have. I'm happy to answer any questions. I'm just keeping it super brief, and we can always follow-up with the Council EDs, separately, if that would be most effective way to address any concerns or questions, but, with that, I'll stop, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Kelly. Do you have any questions for Kelly? All right, there being no questions, we'll move on to the next item on our agenda, the NS1 Technical Guidance Workshops. That would be Jenni.

MS. WALLACE: Good afternoon, everybody.
Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nicholas is going to pull up a presentation, and in the interest of time, I, too, will try and be quick and to the point, as much as possible. And, so, just -- the purpose of this presentation is to give you guys a quick update on where NOAA Fisheries is, with the Technical Guidance for National Standard One. So, Nick, if you could move to the next slide. After the National Standard Guide -- or after the NS1 guidelines were last revised in 2016, we formed an NS1 Technical Working Group, with members from Science Centers, our Regional Offices, and headquarters Offices, and Council Staff, including some of your folks. The purpose of that workgroup is to develop technical guidance on NS1 topics to support our decision-making. The workgroup is working on multiple products, right now, on key NS1 topics, and I'm going to give you a quick status update of where we are with those. So, next slide.

The Technical Guidance Workgroup has three subgroups. One is on reference points, two
is carryover and phase-in, and three is data gaps and alternative approaches, and, so, I'll, now, give you a quick update on each of those groups. Next slide. So, subgroup one is the most -- the most significant subgroup one project, right now, is a tech memo that's focused on the estimation of FMSY, BMSY, and their proxies. As you all know, reference points, such as MSY, FMSY, and BMSY, they form the basis for fisheries management, here, in the U.S.

So, direct estimation of FMSY and BMSY can be very challenging, and, as a result, management of many of the stocks in the U.S. rely on FMSY and BMSY proxies instead. There's been numerous amounts of research on both direct estimation of FMSY and BMSY and the selection of appropriate MSY proxies, since the last technical guidance, and that was back in 1998. So, basically, the document that the subgroup is working, right now, on will summarize that research that's happened since that time.

So, so, there is this group, right now,
the -- there's a draft in development. Since I -- since we last briefed you, in November, the subgroup has continued to meet and discuss considerations for selecting FMSY and BMSY proxies. The target for a draft completion date of the paper is fall of 2020. When the draft is complete, it'll go to the full NS1 Technical Guidance Workgroup for review, and after that, we will brief leadership and send to the SSCs and the councils for review. So, that's a general update of where that group is.

Let's move to the next slide. Subgroup two, the carryover and phase-in, they've produced a tech memo that provides technical guidance for designing, evaluating, and implementing carryover and phase-in provisions. The current status is, last year, the councils reviewed this draft tech memo. We have since revised the memo to address any council comments, and most of the comments were actually very minor. So, the tech memo's basically in the final clearance stage, and we actually hope to publish it in the next couple of
months, or later this month, early next.

All right, subgroup three, so, this work is exploring effective ACLs for data limited stocks. So, as you all know, setting and managing ACLs in data poor fisheries can be a large challenge. During the last round of NS1 guideline revisions, so that was back in 2016. This included new language clarifying that councils can recommend alternative approaches for developing management measures and reference points for data poor fisheries, while still complying with the mandates of the MSA.

So, subgroup three, they have been charged with developing guidance on how to best use that flexibility, particularly with respect to ACLs. They are focusing on identifying stocks for which setting and/or managing an ACL, pursuant to the NS1 guidelines, is particularly challenging. They are recommending alternative approaches for defining and managing to an ACL that will comply with MSA and prevent overfishing. They're identifying assessment approaches that could be
used to generate valid assessments for certain
types of data poor stocks. So, where they are
right now, that group has produced a draft
technical guidance that includes several sets of
ideas. NMFS and our general counsel are currently
reviewing many of those ideas, and we're -- hope
to be able to provide the draft edit at a future
CCC meeting, and, with that, I tried to be
super-fast. Hopefully, I didn't talk too fast for
you all. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and if anybody has
any quick questions, we can -- I can try and
answer them or get my experts to.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you,
Jenni. Do we have any questions for Jenni?

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, this is
Phil Anderson, from Pacific Council. I was just
wondering what role, if any, the -- any Science
Center's staff members played on the subgroups,
particularly subgroups one and three?

MS. WALLACE: So, I am fairly certain
that each of the subgroups have had Science Center
representation. I don't have in front of me --
I'm looking in my cheat sheet. I don't have the membership, but we can get that for you.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, I appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: This is John Carmichael, with the South Atlantic. Will -- or is group three getting into how they define data limited stocks, or is at least some guidance and direction there?

MS. WALLACE: Yes, that is, in fact, one of the parts of that. It's not finalized, and, so, I can't tell you, for sure, but that is one of the things that they're looking at here, to set the stage.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. NIES: All right, this Tom Nies, of New England. I got a couple of comments, Jenni, perhaps questions, Jenni, okay? You know, we really appreciate the effort that's going into trying to produce this technical guidance, and we look forward to reviewing the draft document. I hope we get enough time to give, particularly, the
first one a good review, when we look at it. We're a little concerned, based on the participation of one of the members in the working group, from our council, that the guidance may not really be enough. You think it's going to describe some best practices, and what we're concerned about is it's not really going to harmonize the science with current laws and policy.

You know, the whole idea of MSY management seems to skip over the idea that we may have lack of stationarity in the environment. There's some concern about the approaches we're using, whether they're really consistent with management strategy evaluation. It's not clear to us, when the -- with a focus on F 40 percent and other proxies for FMSY, whether it's really -- how far these are going to go in addressing what I would call model resistant situations, rather than data poor situations, particularly with respect to BMSY targets. We've had a number of stock assessments over the recent years, which have
failed for various reasons. They've gone from analytic approaches to various types of ad hoc approaches, and while it seems possible to come up with some ideas for fishing mortality targets in those cases, the Science Center has really struggled with being able to come up with any BMSY targets or any analogs to BMSY targets in this area. And, of course, we haven't seen the draft document yet, but I've had some conversations with some of the people on your staff and with Dr. Methot, over the last couple months, and it's not clear to me that those issues are going to be addressed, I hope they are, in the final version that we see. Thank you.

MS. WALLACE: Yep. Thanks, Tom. I --

I've noted that.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thanks, Tom.

Any other comments or questions?

MR. GOURLEY: Yes, I have -- this is John, CNMI. Do you know when the subgroup three report is going to actually be released to the councils for review?
MS. WALLACE: So, no. The timing is quite unclear on that one. We're still very much in the development phase.

MR. GOURLEY: Okay, because we have -- we're faced with data poor stocks out in the Western Pacific, almost with everything we're dealing with, and this is actually very important to us, and we'd really like to be able to get that, that report out, so that we can provide comments, take a look at potential different pro -- MSY proxies because we have issues out here, that we need to deal with, and we'd like to kind of get going on it. Thank you.

MS. WALLACE: Yep, understood.

MR. SOLIAI: And if I could just add onto that, Jenni. Thank you, John. Since that -- it hasn't been released yet, at this point, you need to maybe consider alternative management actions. All right, any other comments?

There being none, we'll move onto the next agenda item, Bycatch Initiatives. Jenni, you still have the floor.
MS. WALLACE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Nick is going to pull up the next presentation for me, and, Nick, you can just go straight to the second slide for me.

All right, so, quick outline. I hope to be as speedy as I was last time. I'm going to give you a quick update on several national initiatives that we have at -- continuing efforts to reduce bycatch, while also sustainably managing our fisheries. So, I'll talk to you about standardized bycatch reporting methodology, our reduction -- bycatch reduction strategy and implementation plan, and then the BREP.

Next slide. So, the SBREM, so, the Magnuson Stevens Act, required all fishery management plans to establish a standardized bycatch reporting methodology. The final rule was published in 2017. Thank you to all of the councils for your efforts to review your SBREM for consistency with this 2017 rule. All the regions and the councils are actively making progress on their reviews right now, and consistency of this
rule is imperative, and we very much understand that at NMFS. And we also recognize, though, that each fishery management plan is very unique, and, therefore, the reviews and conclusions of those reviews are going to be specific to each and every one of the fishery management plans themselves.

NMFS, through these reviews, is not requiring any standardized templates or not establishing any additional guidance beyond the rule, itself, and as a reminder, if the reviews do identify a need for an amendment to an SBRM, that needs to be concluded by February 21, 2022, which is five years from when the final rule was published. My office, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, we are working with the regions to track the implementation of the reviews, and we're providing additional coordination guidance, as necessary, but it looks like we're generally on track. So, that's SBRM.

Let's move to the next slide. So, in December of 2016, NMFS completed the National Bycatch Reduction Strategy. The goal of that
strategy was to guide and coordinate NOAA fisheries' efforts to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality, in support of sustainably managing fisheries and recovering certain protected species. As you may recall, NMFS solicited feedback from the councils during the development of the Bycatch Reduction Strategy. We have, since, finalized the Bycatch Reduction Strategy Implementation Plan. So, this implantation plan outlines tasks that the headquarters' offices, our regional offices, and science centers are going to take to implement the actual strategy. Categories of efforts that we are doing include monitoring and estimating, research, conserve and manage, enforce, and communication, but the plan is a five-year implementation plan, and it covers activity from 2020 to 2024. The implementation plan has been posted on our website, and I believe there was a link to it, too, on the CCC meeting agenda, and we also intend to prepare progress reports, every two years, so we can continue to report out, to the CCC, how it is that we're doing
on the implementation plan.

And let's move to the next slide, Nick.

The last thing, I want to give you an update on is the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program, BREP. The fiscal year '20 funding opportunity was announced back in December of 2019. As a reminder, the program supports development of technological solutions and changes in fishing practices designed to minimize bycatch. So, since 2012, we awarded over $2.5 million a year, and, this year, we've received 104 preproposals and 48 full applications, across all the regions and priorities, and we're in the final stages of getting those awards out, and the awards will be granted during this coming summer. So, that was bycatch, three different things, in a quick nutshell. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to take any quick questions.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Jenni. All right. We'll entertain questions right now. We'll start back with -- at -- with the North Pacific. Any questions?
MR. WITHERELL: Yes, this is Dave.

Jenni, just a question, could you remind us of what the role of the council is -- councils are in the Bycatch Reduction Strategy?

MS. WALLACE: So, in the strategy, you guys helped inform the actual strategy, the implementation plan itself, are basically NMFS efforts that we will do, but, obviously, you as our partners, the councils, will be involved in the meeting of those items. Does that help, Dave?

MR. WITHERELL: Yeah, that, that helps. I just wanted to make sure that there wasn't a piece that we were supposed to have for you, or to meet the strategy without NMFS asking for the councils to --

MS. WALLACE: Nope. That's you -- there is nothing that says it is the council's responsibility to do X, Y, and Z. It's all put on NMFS and, obviously, with your help, but not the onus on you.

MR. WITHERELL: Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Pacific
Council, any questions?

MR. TRACY: Just to quickly clarify that with a standardized bycatch reporting methodology, so the -- if a amendment is necessary, the amendment needs to be completed by February of 2022? Is that -- did I get that right?

MS. WALLACE: You got that right.

MR. TRACY: Okay.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. Caribbean Council?

MR. ROLON: No questions at this time.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Miguel. Gulf Council?

MS. SIMONDS: No questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SOLIAI: Is there any in the South Atlantic?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No questions. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Mid-Atlantic?

MR. NIES: No questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
MR. SOLIAI: New England?

MR. MOORE: No questions.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Western Pacific?

MS. GRANGER: No comment.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. No comments.

All right, thank you. Thank you, Jenni.

MS. WALLACE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. We'll move on to our next agenda item, the NMFS Guidance on Changing Stock Status from Known to Unknown.

Regina?

MS. SPALLONE: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Yes, I'm here today to discuss the development of a new procedural directive that will guide internal agency decisions when considering a stock status change from a known status to an unknown status for the Secretary's required status determination decisions under the Magnusson Act. The agency has a process in place for making stock status changes and this directive will help inform that process when the request is
to switch to an unknown status.

Over the years, the agency has addressed several of these kind of requests, to change to unknown, using informal guidance, but these requests are getting more complicated, particularly with growing instances of scientific uncertainty in the assessments. So, we felt that we needed to formalize our internal guidance for increased transparency and consistency of our decision-making. So, with that in mind, we developed a methodology to address some of the most common scenarios. Next slide, please, Nick.

Today, I'm going to go over a summary of the directive, and let you know where it's going, and just kind of get your reaction. So, again, the goal of this procedure is to provide internal guidance to ensure that our decisions are aligned with expectations in a transparent and consistent fashion. This will also help address when we have some very difficult decisions. Again, some of these are getting pretty contentious, and we want to remove ambiguity, make things go a little bit
more smoothly, and that will, of course, help
support the need for timely management decisions.

Next slide, please, Nick.

So, the scenario -- the directive is
organized into more basic scenarios, and these are
some of the more common ones that we have had or
seen come across our desks in recent years. So,
the -- you can see them here. We'll go -- I'll
take each of them, kind of give you a summary of
them, in turn. So, next slide, please, Nick.

The first scenario is changes to
management unit, and this one is fairly
straightforward. It describes situations in which
managers change the stock management unit, and it
recognizes that the new management unit may, in
fact, be unknown in some situations, for example,
where managers pull a stock out of a management
unit, but don't yet have status determination
criteria, or SDC, in place. The new managed unit
may have an unknown status. The procedure does
also recognize that, however, in some cases, it
may be reasonable to retain the known status of
that original stock until a stock assessment, especially -- this might be appropriate where management units are descended from stocks that have an overfished or overfishing -- subject to overfishing determination, and, of course, any such retention of that status should be justified in the record. So, the next slide, please.

Scenario B addresses aging stock assessments, and this scenario recognizes that as an assessment ages, managers may lose confidence in the status determination. Status determination based on old assessments could be problematic, when they no longer reflect the current status of the stock. However, with no clear standard to determine when an aging assessment is no longer suitable to support a stock status, several agency documents related to assessment prioritization and performance tracking help kind of set some guideposts for us, here, and depending on considerations appropriate for the stock, such as its life history, it might be appropriate to change the status of a stock to an unknown status,
when based with an aged stock assessment. The next slide, please.

Scenario C is really sort of the crux of why, you know, what brought about a lot of this procedural directive, and it describes some broad situations, where stock assessments failed to provide a status recommendation, and we've kind of split this one into several sub scenarios indicative or reflective of the nature stock status, stock assessments, and the uncertainty associated with them. So, Scenario C1, rejecting a new assessment, accepts previous assessment, it's fairly straightforward. This situation is where a new model is attempted in the assessment, and that model fails, but scientists will often use the old model from the previous assessments, rerun with new data, in a process called a continuity run, and where that continuity run is done and accepted, we would use that, with those results, to help determine the status of the stock.

C2 is a little bit more complicated.
Here, the reviewers might -- would reject both the updated model and that continuity run. So, here, it would be similar to C1, but you wouldn't have any of that updated data. Under this scenario, and really in all cases within this procedure, our primary intent would be to retain the last known stock status, when possible, but, in this situation, models can't provide a numerical reference point to evaluate against the SDC, and there's evidence to support continued known status. Then, we would maintain the current status, and how that would look sort of operationally is, like, if a stock were overfished and the assessment showed that stocks remain -- biomass remains at historically low levels, that might maintain the -- provide evidence to maintain a continued overfished status.

Conversely, if the model can't provide a numerical reference point, and there's no evidence to support the current status, then we could -- would move the stock to unknown, and how that would look is, for instance, a stock that is
listed as subject to overfishing, based on an old assessment and if catch rates were reduced to near zero, there might be a lot of uncertainty regarding that overfishing determination, and then we would change that status to unknown. So, based on our discussions with the centers, the regions, and our past experience with this, we believe that we're more likely to have evidence to support and continue the overfished status versus overfishing, as overfishing tends to be a little bit more variable, and, so, we'd probably be more likely to move to unknown for overfishing.

C3 is a fairly -- we would expect to be fairly uncommon, and it's kind of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but we have heard that scientists, on occasion -- from scientists, on occasion, that a peer review can completely invalidate an assessment. There may be such a major flaw in the methodology that invalidates the previous stock status and determination. In this case, we'd either maintain the previous known status, as we would through scenario C2, or move
to unknown, depending on the evidence of the case, and, again, we would -- there would be some flexibility, depending on individual scenarios because assessments being fairly complicated, you'd have to look at the specifics of the individual case. So, this sort of provides some guideposts for us. The next slide, please, Nick?

Scenario D is in which an assessment deviates from the SDC that's specified in the FMP. Assessment updates will often provide new scientific information, in which the latest stock assessment recommends that the status be based on SDC that is different from that in the FMP. In the past, we would report the status coming out of the assessment, as it's based on best scientific information available, BSIA, and inform the council to adopt the new SDC into their FMP to align with the science, but based on feedback we have gotten in the -- during the development of this directive, we are taking a different approach. In this situation, the agency would maintain the previous stock status, until the
relevant council adopts the SDC, and the reason for this change is that, under Magnusson, we have to make these stock status determine -- decisions, based on the SDC that are specified within the Fishery Management Plan.

So, this is a more sound approach for this situation. I will note, though, that this does create, or has the potential to create, some awkward situations, where management moves forward, based on a new science, yet the status of the stock is static, based on the old science, you know, where you have, say, overfishing determinations and that, you know, that support an increase in annual catch limits. So, this could be ameliorated with adaptive or flexible status determination criteria in place, for example, where they -- where the FMP specifies that SDC might automatically be adopted into the FMP upon based -- BSIA determination. Some councils, I note, already use such an approach, have flexible SDCs. So, with that, slide eight, please, Nick.

So, that is pretty much the quick
high-level summary of the procedural directive, and, as I mentioned, these were -- are expected to help guide internal deliberations to go more smoothly as we address these increasingly complicated and often contentious determinations that come out of our stock assessments. As a procedural directive, the guidance will go through formal clearance within the agency before it becomes final, and we do expect that to be happening soon. So, with that, I welcome your thoughts on this approach, and happy to take any questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Regina. Before I open up for questions, I would -- do want to ask all the panelists to please remove your raised hand status after you've made your comments. Some of you still have that highlighted, so. So, we'll open it up to the panelists for questions. North Pacific Council, question?

MR. TWEIT: This is Phil Tweit. Just one, I may have missed this, and, so, I apologize. I was wondering if the SSCs are going to providing
comments on the draft directive before it's finalized.

MS. SPALLONE: I don't believe that that is part of the deliberative process for policy directives. So, I can't really say, at this point, but, Stephanie, I would like if you -- if you're online, if you would respond to that. I don't believe so, though, sir.

MS. HUNT: Hi, Regina and Bill. No, this document isn't going out for external review. This is your chance to give us any comments you have, but it's guiding internal agency decision. So, we're not sending it out for external.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you. Pacific Council?

MR. TRACY: Thanks. Well, I guess I'm disappointed to hear that last comment. You know, I think we've been pretty good partners with NMFS, in terms of reviewing these sorts of things. I mean, it, yeah, it's getting internal agency decision-making, but they are certainly things that affect the councils, and, you know, this is,
among other things, this is a good example of what would be nice to be in that spreadsheet, that Kelly went over, a couple of agenda items ago, so that we would know what's coming, what the schedule is, and what our opportunity for reviews might be. So, maybe I'll just leave it at that.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you. Caribbean, any questions or comments?

MR. ROLON: No, just a comment at this time. I agree with Chuck, kind of interesting for us, that we won't have the chance to comment on something that will be affecting us for the next decade.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. Gulf Council?

MS. SIMONDS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, I had a question. Thank you for the presentation. So, we received I guess a BSIA framework for, not too long ago, policy guidance that we need to follow, regarding stock assessments and the different tiers and the different information, and that went to our SSC, we commented on it, and then we got the final
guidance. How do you see this fitting in, perhaps, with the regional BSIA guidance that we're supposed to be working on because this does have management implications, and it's likely to cause quite a bit of confusion, when we're talking about an amendment, perhaps, where we're changing the status determination criteria, but then we have a table of stock status that says something different, and, so, I think we have to think about that a little bit more, regarding, like, our council members, our stakeholders, and it could cause quite a bit of confusion. So, do you have any comments on how you see, perhaps, maybe this guidance would work with those regional frameworks we're supposed to be working on, I guess, right now?

MS. SPALLONE: In terms of the management implications, we do recognize that that is a concern, and it's a little bit out of the scope of this procedural directive, in terms of providing guidance for these particular scenarios, but I don't know how it would tie in with the
BSIA.

MS. SIMONDS: Well, well, I guess it ties -- I mean, they're directly linked, right, because you have your SSC reviewing the stock assessments. They're determining what's BSIA, but it's based on the current SDC, which may be recommending new SDC, which directly contribute to whether it's overfished or undergoing overfishing. So, I -- maybe that, that Scenario D, maybe we need to work on a little bit more. I think it could cause quite a bit of confusion at the council level.

MS. SPALLONE: Okay, thank you. I will note that.

MS. HUNT: This is Stephanie. I can chime in a little bit because I helped with the BSIA procedural directive. I can see your point about them being tied, but they're definitely in lock step. So, the BSIA procedural directive lays out that, when the agency is making stock status decisions, the SSC has a role, and it lays out all those roles. Ultimately, it's the agency's
decision. It's -- it is our role to make the 
stock status decisions. So, all of those steps in 
the BSIA process would still take place, and then 
at the end the agency makes the decision, and it 
is also informed by this procedural directive, the 
known to unknown procedural directive, that Regina 
outlined.

MR. SOLIAI: All right, thank you.

Moving onto the South Atlantic.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, thank you. I 
appreciate the update, Regina. I think, like the 
others, I'm a little disappointed that we're not 
going to get more of a chance to weigh in on it, 
particularly for SSCs and others, to do a bit more 
review because it is -- it is pretty critical to a 
lot of the business that they do, and it crosses 
over into their making recommendations and 
certainly interpreting assessments and judging if 
an assessment is adequate or not. I think it's 
some of the things with criteria C. For example, 
you may have a group of reviewers looking at a new 
assessment, but then not looking back at the prior
assessment, particularly if it's not been done in what we commonly call, like, the continuity run, where they update the data. So, I think there could be issues with that, and I also think the aging assessments is a challenge. As it says, there's no clear rules, and there never is. Certainly, 5 to 10 years sounds reasonable.

So, one of the things I wonder, if this will go back and be applied retroactively to some stocks that have status determinations that are a lot older than, say, a 10-year assessment, and I'll just throw a couple of examples out there, that have been in the South Atlantic's craw for many years. Speckled Hind and Warsaw Grouper are listed as overfishing. They haven't ever been assessed. There's no OFL. There were some catch curves done in the '90s, and it's one of those that the Council has an A, B, C of zero, and little else that they can do for these stocks, and, yet, getting that status changed has been quite a challenge. So, appreciate the effort to get this. I, like others, would like to have seen
maybe a little more Council feedback opportunity.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, John.

Mid-Atlantic?

MR. MOORE: Hi, Regina. Good to see you again.

MS. SPALLONE: Hey, Chris.

MR. MOORE: I don't have any additional comments to add. I agree with many of the previous comments. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Chris. New England Council?

MR. NIES: Hi, this is Tom Nies, but I do have a number of comments and questions, since this appears to be our only chance to comment on this document that I think we got last Thursday or Friday. I guess I'm concerned that we haven't had enough time to look at it, to thoroughly consider whether it addresses the issues that we've run into, at least, within our council, and I suspect within other councils, as well.

You know, we have some assessment reports that come out, and say things, like the
model should not be used for reference points or stock status determinations, but we -- I don't think we ever asked our peer review panels to go back and review the past assessment. They're only basing comments like that on the current assessment, which I think is a point that John just made.

We also have a number of assessments, where, coming out of the peer review, we get statements that say things, like they conclude that fishing is not responsible for the lack of response, and the current dynamics, current population dynamics, are likely not driven by fishing. Now, to me, that argues that an overfishing determination is not required, or is not really appropriate for this situation, but, in many cases, in these situations, it was a past stock assessment that concluded overfishing was occurring. We may or may not have -- we have taken actions to reduce that, but we get this new determination, and it's not clear to me if this is covered by all the scenarios that you talk about.
When you refer to biomass being at historic low levels, you know, this brings up a point that is one of Dr. Sissenwine's concerns about the National Standard 1 technical guidance. You know, assuming historic low levels are somehow representative of current conditions, assume stationary biological processes that may not exist, particularly given the changes in climate that we're seeing in New England and other areas, where the water temperatures are warming rapidly, and then one other point I'll make is that your scenario B, I think, creates a catch-22 situation, or it at least has for us, already.

We've had a stock assessment, where the analytic age-based assessment was thrown out. The substitute was an empirical approach. As I mentioned during the discussion of the National Standard Technical Guidance, the empirical approach discussion doesn't always produce reference points, particularly biomass target reference points. So, when we submitted an FMP change to adopt the recommendation of the peer
review, that the status determination criteria were unknown, the agency refused to accept that, and disapproved that, and went back to the status determination criteria that were from the last analytic assessment, which, of course, has now been rejected.

So, we've got no way to measure stock status, compared to those referenced there, and, so, scenario D doesn't address that issue at all. You know, it doesn't seem like it addresses it, to me, and there may be other issues here. So, I know that this is just based on a reading of this thing over a couple days. My staff and SSC hasn't looked at it in any detail because they've been busy with other things, and this is why it troubles me that this is our only chance to comment on a policy directive that we're going to be wrestling with for some time into the future. So, that, that holds up my comments, Mr. Chairman, but after the Western Pacific's comments, I don't know if you would be willing to entertain a motion that I'd be willing to offer. Thank you.
MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Tom. Sounds good. West Pac?

MS. SIMONDS: Right. We're drafting a motion now, but I just want to ditto, you know, Tom's comments because we would somehow model they're good for ACLs, oh, but not for stock status determination. So, why is that? And we're -- in our region, we have severe data limitations, and, so, they lead to, you know, unreliable assessments with pessimistic outlooks, and, so, we're going to recommend, from us, anyway, we'll send it around to the EDs, is that interim rebuilding plans, you know, really should be waived until reliable scientific information is implemented. So, Chris, I hope you direct the staff to allow us some time for our SSCs and staff to review this, to review this document. Thank you.

MR. OLIVER: All right, Kitty and Tom, comments heard and appreciated, and I will reconvene later this evening or tomorrow morning on that question. Thank you.
MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you. I think the comments and expression --

MR. GOURLEY: Chairman?

MR. SOLIAI: -- at this point, is quite unanimous.

MR. GOURLEY: Chairman?

MR. SOLIAI: Yes? Mr. Gourley?

MR. GOURLEY: Yeah, I just wanted to add a little bit to what Kitty had to say, please?

MR. SOLIAI: That's fine.

MR. GOURLEY: Yeah, I mentioned the challenges we have in the Western Pacific, during the NS1 presentation, and it's, actually, you know, you -- we have data. We have a lot of data poor stocks that we have to manage, and we're hit with a second perfect storm, is that the data that we have, on our data poor stocks, is in very bad -- in some -- in many cases, is in very bad shape, and, you know, a case in point in this is our bottom fish in American Samoa, which came up with a overfishing and an overfished situation, and when we went down to American Samoa and talked to
the fishermen, the fishermen are sitting there, scratching their heads, saying, what's overfished? You know, they -- it's just -- it seems like there's some very questionable data going in, and, so, once we get to the overfishing/overfished status, we can't seem to get out of it and move on, but we seem to be having a precautionary approach that's -- that keeps us in that whirlpool, and we'd like to be able to explore some of the options that NMFS is looking at in their policy directive. So, I would like to also echo of the many before me, please, let us have a chance to offer comments, and y'all are the guys that'll make the decisions, and it certainly shouldn't hurt if we're given the opportunity to simply provide you some comments for you to consider. Thank you.

MS. SIMONDS: Mr. Chairman, I just want to add that our SSC is also looking at NS3, as well.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. All right, well, thank -- thank you. I think the comments
that have been expressed are -- have made its way across to NMFS and I think will be crystal, considering, you know, the discipline, then, and, hopefully, recommendations to reconsider consultation with council. Tom, you wanted the floor back, when we were done with West Pac?

MR. NIES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, based on Mr. Oliver's comments, I'll defer making a motion until we hear back from him, tomorrow morning.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. All right, thank you. All right, thank you, everyone. I think we're at the last section on our agenda for today, public comments. Do we have any public comments?

MR. PIEPER: Hi, Mr. Chair. This is Nicholas. Yes, we do have some public comments. The first one is from Eric Kingma. He is the Executive Director of the Hawaii Long Line Association, and I am unmuting him now.

MR. KINGMA: Hello, hi, can you hear me? Okay, good, awesome. You know, aloha, everyone.

Eric Kingma, Executive Director of Hawaii Long
Line Association, and, you know, prior to the current situation, we were very much looking forward to showing you our industry here, in Hawaii, and participating in the CCC at Turtle Bay, on Oahu's north shore. I'll just say next time, everyone, it will be -- it will be great.

So, just a little bit about HLA, we represent 140 active long line vessels operating out of Honolulu Harbor and the associated seafood industry. Our fishery is the largest food producer in the state of Hawaii, over 30 million pounds produced for the largest fishery, dockside value of about $100 million, annually, ranking Honolulu Harbor the nation's top 10. I think we were sixth in 2018.

So, over the last 12 weeks, our fleet has lost over $15 million in revenue, as compared to the recent five-year average, and if market conditions persist, we're looking at approximately a $50 million loss of revenue for this year. So, we are in a very, very tough situation. The fleet is still operating on a much lower scale. We're still producing high-quality sustainable healthy
seafood for Hawaii and U.S. Consumers, which is very important for our locals' food security and also the national seafood trade deficit.

However, as these economic impacts persist, our industry, our fleet is facing a very highly uncertain future. I just want to comment on two things on the agenda, and that's the CARES Act funding, and then, also, the recent EO. So, on the CARES Act funding, we -- we're still very much disappointed in the process followed by NMFS, in allocating the allocated $300 million. I think, at a minimum, we were expecting a Federal Registry notice, explaining the process and allowing for public comment, prior to the allocation. So, it just kind of caught us off guard, when the announcement, came a few weeks ago, that, in fact, NMFS has made a decision and allocated to the states. I was expecting someone to reach out from the Fishery Service to document our impacts, since we are, I believe, a major fishery to the United States. I only received one call from NMFS, and that was the Science Center,
in the very early days, late March, and that was it.

Hawaii is getting $4.3 million, very much lower than we -- what we expected, and now the force is monitorization, myself, to go fight for those funds, amongst various sectors in the state. The SBA programs don't match well with fishing vessel operations, and I would be interested to hear from around the regions, or around the country, and how fishing vessels, if at all, have access to any of those SBA programs because they haven't been accessed for our fleet. So, it's not really fair that we now have to go compete for the very small amounts of funds with, say, wholesale companies, aquaculture companies, that have received forgivable SBA loans.

Also, this has placed the states in a very difficult position to further allocate the funds, and, certainly, political issues are going to arise. We're also concerned that the delay and clouded nature of the allocation may also dis-sway Congress from providing additional stimulus.
funding to support the nation's fishing industry, and very much a concern of ours, so, and, I think, around the country.

I'll switch gears, now, to the executive order I'm promoting, American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth. We support President Trump's EO and look forward to its implementation, and we're very much interested in how the EO could be used to promote U.S. seafood over foreign imports. We get hammered very much in our U.S. market, from foreign imports that -- direct completely with our landed fish value.

Certainly, there are unnecessary regulatory barriers within our fleet, such as closures to U.S. waters, and we'll work with the Western Pacific Council to identify them for removal. However, there are also several regulatory processes that have been stalled that would help our industry, and, so, the streamlining aspects of the EO are very, very important. For example, we've been waiting over two years for new measures to remove and artificially low sea turtle
hard cap in our fishery, and, you know, this fishery historically produces over 50 percent of domestic swordfish.

So, even though the Council's amendment has been approved, the Hatchery and Fishery Service has yet to issue the final rule, which I think is inconsistent with Magnusson, but, you know, given the economic situation in our fleet, the administrative delays by the Fishery Service don't match the Trump Administration's policies to support business and industry. So, we very much encourage NMFS to work with the councils to expeditiously and meaningfully implement the EO and further address the serious situation facing our nation's fisheries. Thank you very much, and mahala, everyone, and hope to see you again soon.

Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, Eric. We appreciate that. Nick -- Nicholas, before we go into our next public comment, I do want to remind -- in the interest of time, to please keep your comments no longer than three
minutes.

MR. PIEPER: Hi, everyone. Our next public comment will be coming from Peter Flournoy. He is representing The American Fisherman's Research Foundation, and I'm unmuting him now.

MR. FLOURNOY: Good day, everyone. I really appreciate this opportunity to speak to you all. Most of what I'm going to say is -- even though I -- I've realized this is a meeting of the councils. Most of what I'm going to say in appeal to the top leadership of NMFS, although, I think it's very important to have the support of all the councils.

My comments have to do with offshore wind issues, and I want to thank everyone for a very excellent presentation. It was both very thorough and very informative, and it pointed out many of the things that have to be done in these situations with BOEM projects, and it also pointed out a lot of the problems, and we heard, even before that, the problems that COVID-19 have created for ongoing surveys and probably for the
continuity of those surveys with earlier ones that have already been done, and it's certainly a problem that we're going to be facing with these offshore wind towers.

Fishermen can't really count on state agencies for their representation of their interests because of the real highly motivated green energy pursuits of most of the governors out here, on the West Coast. The East Coast has been working for two or three years, if not longer, and yet there have been huge holes just in the last week with a couple of announcements. Massachusetts and the Vineyard Wind Company came out with a totally insignificant mitigation and compensation plan with virtually no input whatsoever from fishermen.

This morning, the U.S. Coast Guard released its MARIPARS report. In English, it's an access route study, that was deplete of many comments that had been put in. They settled for one nautical mile spacing, and with the wind towers, the wind turbines, and their reasoning was
that the five turbines off of Block Island, which are spaced only half a nautical mile apart, didn't present a sufficient study area where they could look into radar interference of these wind towers, and we know that down in Cape May, the proposal down there is 0.67 nautical mile spacing between the towers.

So, this plea is that what's going on, on the West Coast, is going to be different than what's on the East Coast because we're going to be dealing with floating turbines, as opposed to those that are anchored, and, so, many of the problems will be the same, but there will be different and new problems, and I would say, with what's going on with BOEM and the lessons they've learned on the East Coast, they're really speeding along on the West Coast, and we're probably at least two years behind where we should be, in terms of fisheries research. Marine mammals are impacted, what routes about marine mammals and fish may change, and the interferences there. So, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak
to you all, and I really want to put in a plug for focusing more of NMFS's energy on probably the biggest threat to U.S. Fisheries, perhaps even bigger than IUU fishing. Thank you.

MR. SOLIAI: Thank you, Peter. We appreciate your comments. I understand we have one more, Nicholas?

MR. PIEPER: Yes, one more -- McGrew Rice, and I will unmute him now.

MR. RICE: Hey, Archie?

MR. SOLIAI: Hi, McGrew.

MR. RICE: Do you hear me, Archie, okay?

MR. SOLIAI: Yep. The floor is yours.

MR. RICE: Okay. I want to reiterate what Eric Kingma just said because I'm having to come -- our charter fleet is having to compete with Eric and the long line fleet for the same amount of money, and our charter fleet brings in about $50 million a year, to the state of Hawaii, and our tournaments bring in a good portion of that, and having the -- the owner-operators of our charter fleet haven't been able to get the loans
that the bigger companies have been able to get, and there's -- they're pretty much -- I'd say a bunch of them will be out of business, here, because our permits have been pulled, and we don't know when the DNLR will give us our permits back. So, they're having to compete for that money with the long line fleet. It's a pretty big deal because, you know, here, you've got two businesses that bring in $150 million to the state of Hawaii, and, you know, it's just not right. Thanks. That's what I'd say.

MR. SOLIAI: All right. Thank you, McGrew. We appreciate the comments and look forward to (inaudible). Thank you, everyone, for the comments. Nicholas, did you have any more?

MR. PIEPER: Yes, that was the third one. Okay.

MR. SOLIAI: Okay. There being no further comments, I think we are done for the agenda for today.

(Whereupon, at 6:28 p.m., the PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)
CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

STATE OF MARYLAND

I, Mark Mahoney, notary public in and for the State of Maryland, do hereby certify that the forgoing PROCEEDING was duly recorded and thereafter reduced to print under my direction; that the witnesses were sworn to tell the truth under penalty of perjury; that said transcript is a true record of the testimony given by witnesses; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this proceeding was called; and, furthermore, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

[Signature]

Mark Mahoney

Notary Public, in and for the State of Maryland

My Commission Expires: June 7, 2022