

Maryland DNR
Winter Meeting of the Sport Fisheries
Advisory Commission

Tuesday,
January 25, 2015

Held at the
Canvasback Conference Room
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Philip Merrill Environmental Center
Annapolis, Maryland

Maryland DNR
Winter Meeting of the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

January 27, 2015

SFAC Members Present:

Bill Goldsborough, Chair

Kate Chaney

Rachel Dean

Mark DeHoff

Jim Gracie

Phil Langley

Val Lynch

Dr. Ray P. Morgan II

Ed O'Brien

David Sikorski

Dave Smith (*proxy for Vince Ringgold*)

Tim Smith

Roger Trageser

James Wommack

SFAC Members Absent :

Micah Dammeyer

Beverly Fleming

Vince Ringgold

Maryland DNR Fisheries Service

Tom O'Connell

Paul Genovese

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KEYNOTE: "---" denotes inaudible in the transcript.

A F T E R N O O N S E S S I O N

(2:13 p.m.)

Welcome and Announcements

by Bill Goldsborough, Chair, SFAC

and Tom O'Connell, Director, MD DNR Fisheries Service

MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Let's get started. Welcome back to the Merrill Center. We have had a few meetings here. Always good to have you here. I get to be here every day and look at this lovely view.

Most of us are here today. Thank you all for coming who could make it. Beverly could not be here so she is out. Vince could not be here but Dave Smith is here Vince. And then Micah is on the phone. Are you there, Micah?

(No response)

MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay. Well, we will be getting Micah on the line. Okay, so before I get to public comment, Tom, I think you had a couple of announcements?

MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. Just first Happy New Year to everybody. Hope everybody had a happy holiday with friends and family, and we are getting back to our business. I was asked to just give an update on the administration, and I don't really have much of an update.

A week ago I could have said we have got a new Secretary, Charlie Evans, but he stepped down last week before his appointment just due to some health concerns and all that.

1 It was great working with Charlie and Mark Belton, who was
2 from Charles County and worked side by side with Charlie
3 during the transition process. We had a good transition team
4 of sport, charter, commercial and environmental advocacy
5 groups on the transition team.

6 So Charlie stepped down last week so Frank Dawson
7 remains as our acting Secretary for the time being. And my
8 understanding is that the administration is going through some
9 interviews with people, and we may hear something this week if
10 they find the right person. So as we learn of information --
11 I am sure you probably will hear even before us sometimes.

12 And, you know, once the new Secretary is found, I am
13 sure there will be a review of the Office of the Secretary
14 down through the units to see if any more changes are needed.
15 So that is kind of where we stand right now. Any questions?

16 (No response)

17 MR. O'CONNELL: All right.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: All right. Thanks, Tom. I
19 forgot to mention that Mack -- we are expecting Mack. That is
20 his chair in the corner. He should be here. That is our last
21 member. And, oh yes, any guests, if you would sign up, if you
22 haven't already, on the table over there, it would be
23 appreciated.

24 Speaking of which, does anybody want to offer a
25 public comment to the commission at this point? Yes, sir.

1 MR. O'CONNELL: Hey, Marty, just for the record,
2 could you just spell -- you know, not just give the acronym
3 but give the name of the association?

4 MR. SIMOUNET: Solomons Charter Captains
5 Association. And my last name is spelled S-i-m-o-u-n-e-t.

6 ***Public Comment***

7 MR. SIMOUNET: I am here today to voice the concerns
8 of the SCCA and the Southern Maryland small bayside businesses
9 that may suffer a negative financial impact from the current
10 2015 proposals at hand.

11 From a marketing standpoint, we believe over time
12 the 36-inch minimum fish would negatively impact the general
13 public's perception of our fishery. We have already heard
14 from a number of states in their desire to retain two trophy
15 fish, with one being a minimum of at least 28 inches.

16 Couple that with Maryland's new 20- and 36-inch
17 minimums, and the attrition over the next few years could be
18 devastating to the charter boat industry and other
19 fishery-related businesses that are already struggling with
20 economic hardships.

21 With all this in mind, and the fact that the states
22 are using conservation equivalency to make this reduction
23 work, our proposal focuses on protecting the spawning stock by
24 targeting mostly males in the proposal last week -- I assume
25 everybody got it in their packet?

1 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

2 MR. SIMOUNET: We also recognize that the other
3 stakeholders unfortunately depend -- not that the other, that
4 other stakeholders unfortunately depend on the tournaments
5 that target the spawning stock. So we have asked for an
6 opportunity to incorporate a fish in the 42-inch range to the
7 creel limit.

8 In the future it would be nice to have a group of
9 people with creative marketing minds to help Maryland develop
10 a structured season that would cover all of our diverse
11 stakeholders' wishes and not just one or two of them. Keep in
12 mind that as much as we all may differ, we have much more in
13 common.

14 In closing, we wish that you would please consider
15 our proposal, which primarily focuses on conservation of the
16 spawning stock and a sustainable summer fishery. And I just
17 want to say as my own business, Kyran Lynn Charters, this will
18 be my 30th year in business, I have logged over 4,000 charters
19 on the Chesapeake out of Chesapeake Beach and Breezy Point.

20 I do realize with this slot-take proposal that we
21 have in place, there will be many a day that I do not catch my
22 limit, but by doing that, as a state, we are protecting the
23 female fish and the resource. And that is our stance.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Marty. We will get to
25 this topic later in the agenda, of course. Is there any other

1 public comment for the commission at this time?

2 (No response)

3 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay then. Thank you. Let's
4 move on to the NRP Activity Report. Is Acting Lieutenant
5 Parker here? Great. Step up to the mic.

6 ***NRP Activity Report***

7 ***by Acting Lt. Aaron Parker, MD DNR NRP***

8 LT. PARKER: How is everyone doing today? I am
9 Acting Lt. Parker of the Natural Resources Police. And I know
10 there was a handout that was sent to everybody that let you
11 know what the stats were for the year and for the last
12 quarter.

13 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: It is in Tab 2.

14 LT. PARKER: If anyone had any questions on that, I
15 would be glad to answer them if I can.

16 (Pause)

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So Lt. Parker, were you just
18 asking to entertain questions --

19 LT. PARKER: Yes, basically.

20 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: -- on the report. Okay, great.

21 LT. PARKER: Everything is explained. We got a new
22 computer system now so everything gets dumped into there so it
23 makes it much easier to give stats, and I don't have to call
24 all around the state to ask people what they got. I can just
25 go right to the computer.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Yes, right. No, this is great.
2 So we will give the commissioners a few minutes to thumb
3 through this. Raise your hand if you have any questions for
4 Lt. Parker.

5 (Pause)

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So I see you have a couple
7 different types of handouts, Lt. Parker. Are we looking
8 through all of them right now then or just the first one?

9 MR. O'CONNELL: It may be good -- this is kind of,
10 this is some more information than we normally get, which is
11 great. So the first handout in your packet, if we were to
12 kind of just go over them, is titled CAD statistics for the
13 fourth quarter 2014. And this is just the number of calls
14 that come in, I guess, to NRP categorized.

15 LT. PARKER: Yes, all the calls that come in, the
16 number of calls. That was just for the fourth quarter, the
17 first one. The second one is how many calls came on for the
18 year, statistics for 2014.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. And then there is a handout
20 that summarizes the citations. Typically we would focus on
21 this element. You know, where the citations are, but there is
22 some back -- some additional information that was provided
23 this time. Any questions on the information that you guys got
24 in your packet? I know there is a lot of information. We
25 will try to get it to you a week ahead of time so you can take

1 a look at it.

2 MR. : Will this be up on the Website, Tom?

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, it is on the Website now.

4 MR. : On Sport Fish's?

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

6 (Pause)

7 LT. PARKER: The one that is interesting, the one
8 where it says last month's statistics? The one thing there it
9 shows in the -- each area it shows how many officers are
10 actually working the area and how many are contributing to
11 these statistics, so it lets you know just how low we are in
12 numbers, of actual field officers working.

13 (Pause)

14 MR. O'CONNELL: Any questions from anybody? As you
15 look it over, if you have a question --

16 LT. PARKER: I will be here.

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: We have got a new system to get
18 used to. A lot more information is always welcome. So
19 Lt. Parker apparently is going to stay a little while in case
20 you do come up with a question, we can come back to it. Let's
21 move on to regulatory updates and scoping. Is Jacob here?
22 Yes.

23 ***Regulatory Updates and Regulatory Scoping Items***

24 ***by Jacob Holtz, MD DNR Fisheries Service***

25 MR. HOLTZ: All right, how are you all doing today?

1 First the regulatory update. As far as public notices go that
2 affect recreational stuff, most of the public notices we did
3 were either aquaculture lease announcements or adjustments to
4 the commercial common pool striped bass fishery.

5 I will point out that we did three public
6 notices -- they will be at the end of the public notices --
7 that will affect recreational folks. We did a notice to close
8 Black Sea Bass for January and February. The reason why we
9 only did it for January and February is the Mid-Atlantic
10 Council still needs to decide what the amendments are going to
11 be for 2015.

12 In general it opens up in May but because we don't
13 have dates we are going to get dates at some point in
14 February. We will do a notice at that point when they do make
15 a decision.

16 We set the summer flounder season for 2015. It is
17 not in this document but it is open all year, with a 16-inch
18 minimum size and four fish, just the same as 2104. And then
19 striped bass, on the Atlantic Coast, so this is the Atlantic
20 Ocean, coastal bays and the tidal tributaries. The creel
21 limit is one fish per day at 28 inches.

22 Regulations that became effective, there wasn't
23 anything that affected recreational folk other than we updated
24 our penalty regulations. Regulations that have been proposed
25 and are currently following the process -- let's see here.

1 The license-free fishing areas, comment actually closed
2 yesterday on those. But we added a couple new license-free
3 fishing areas and took a couple underperforming ones out. We
4 talked about those over the course of last year.

5 The increase in size for peeler crabs for 2015 has
6 been proposed. That comment period ends February 23rd, if you
7 had anything that you wanted to say about that or anything
8 that your folks would want to say.

9 There is a fisheries management area reg. Fisheries
10 owns a number of properties that we manage but the regs that
11 we put in, they are mostly a combination, a consolidation of
12 regs that we have had in different places. But this way folks
13 can go one place and see, you know, this pond that fisheries
14 owns, you know, what are the hours that I am allowed to be
15 there? You know, am I allowed to camp there or whatever the
16 case may be.

17 And that is it as far as regulations go that we
18 submitted. As are as scoping goes, and this is a reminder
19 that when we bring stuff here for scoping, what we want is
20 just some feedback as far as should we do more than what we
21 had planned? We have a little bit adjusted the kind of way
22 that we are formatting these just because we think it
23 communicates the issues better.

24 So we -- if you look at the scoping handout, the
25 format is problem, our recommended solution as the department,

1 and our scoping recommendation. And then if you can give us
2 any feedback on what we have as a solution or what we are
3 planning on doing for scoping, we would really appreciate it.

4 We are -- so just going through it really quick, the
5 spiny dogfish is a commercial adjustment. Currently spiny
6 dogfish are allowed to be at -- you are allowed to land 5
7 percent just fin, so that 5 percent of the spiny dogfish
8 weight that you are landing is allowed to be fins that aren't
9 attached to a shark.

10 Because of changes to the Shark Conversation Act,
11 spiny dogfish have to be landed with their fins attached
12 through landing. Our recommendation to scope that is on the
13 Website and through our electronic means, which is Constant
14 Contact, Facebook and Twitter. We don't have any plans to do
15 any public scoping meetings or hearings or anything like that
16 unless there is a good reason to do so.

17 Striped bass, we are going to be planning on making
18 changes to the commercial fishery. What those changes are, we
19 have a handout that is a letter that we sent to the Striped
20 Bass Workgroup.

21 The things that we are going to be working on this
22 first package are going to be things like permanent transfer
23 of striped bass --- , what to do with permits when somebody
24 either doesn't renew or is removed from the fishery through
25 enforcement action or if someone has five permits and they

1 don't want five permits anymore. What do we with that?

2 So the workgroup is meeting on February 17th. That
3 is their first meeting. That is an open meeting. It is a
4 public meeting that anybody is allowed to attend. As far as
5 public input goes, I wouldn't -- I don't know if there is
6 going to be a whole lot of public input. As for that meeting,
7 that is going to be a workgroup meeting.

8 If you want me to go -- is this a topic for later
9 on, this striped bass, Tom?

10 MR. O'CONNELL: No, not related to the commercial
11 fishery.

12 MR. HOLTZ: Okay. So as far as the commercial
13 sector, that is mostly what we are going to be talking about.
14 Obviously there is going to be a lot that we are going to be
15 putting out about this. I think we are planning on trying to
16 have regs ready by April, which is why we are talking about it
17 right now.

18 In that process, I think that we are going to have a
19 scoping meeting in March, like a public meeting. But
20 obviously we will be in contact with you all. So outside of
21 having a public meeting, and then doing a little of our
22 regular Website and electronic stuff, I don't know if you all
23 thought that there was more outreach that we needed to do.

24 Moving on to yellowfin tuna, we are going to list
25 them as in need of conservation. The reason that we are doing

1 that is because we -- that is the only way that we can have
2 authority to write regs on yellowfin tuna.

3 We currently -- roughly 150,000 pounds of yellowfin
4 tuna is landed in Maryland but it is a federal fishery. So it
5 is not that these folks are actually catching them in Maryland
6 waters. It is that we need the ability to control, do the
7 enforcement once they land in Maryland waters.

8 NRP currently is able to do so, it is just through a
9 more cumbersome federal taking in process. By listing this as
10 in need of conservation and writing regs -- it will be similar
11 to bluefish tuna regs, which basically just says, see the
12 federal rules. NRP can just write a simple ticket to a
13 Maryland court, and it is a lot easier for them to do the
14 enforcement.

15 MR. LYNCH: I have a question on yellowfin.

16 MR. HOLTZ: Yes?

17 MR. LYNCH: Are you saying that in order to get
18 Maryland authority, you have to classify the yellowfin as in
19 need of conservation?

20 MR. HOLTZ: Yes.

21 MR. LYNCH: Do you have any support for that?

22 MR. HOLTZ: Yes, we do. It would be similar to the
23 process that we did for the bluefin tuna. Our biologists
24 would write up a report as far as the reasons for this as in
25 need of conservation, and all of that would be available and

1 | it would be part of the regulatory package and part of the
2 | scoping information we would put out at that time.

3 | MR. LYNCH: So you would write the conservation
4 | report in order to support the authority --

5 | MR. HOLTZ: Yes.

6 | MR. LYNCH: -- not the other way around.

7 | MR. HOLTZ: So the conservation, it is simultaneous.
8 | So the conservation report is part of the regulatory package
9 | that is submitted to list them as in need of conservation.

10 | MR. LYNCH: I just did a little quick math here.
11 | And if you say 150,000 pounds, and these are assumptions that
12 | may not be scientific but, if a football tuna is about 20
13 | pounds, that is 7,500 fish. If a charter boat maxed out every
14 | day, six fish, six passengers, that is 36 fish a day maxing
15 | out, 208 trips, and 208 trips would probably be about 30 days'
16 | worth of fish. And this assuming they max out.

17 | So personally I don't see 150,000 pounds, at
18 | least -- that is just recreational side. I don't know about
19 | the commercial. I don't see that as an issue, and I can tell
20 | you from personal experience that there is enforcement in
21 | Indian River and in Ocean City on boats coming back from off
22 | shore, and it includes the Coast Guard as well as NRP.

23 | So, you know, they are checking fish and checking
24 | tickets, the whole nine yards. I can understand your wanting
25 | to get authority but my comment is I don't see this as

1 necessary.

2 MR. O'CONNELL: So if I am hearing you correctly,
3 Val, it is that you already see NRP enforcing the federal
4 rules in state waters.

5 MR. LYNCH: Yes.

6 MR. HOLTZ: And we have authority to do that under
7 the -- there is an agreement with the Coast Guard that the
8 officers out there are acting as federal agents. It is just a
9 matter of how easy is it for NRP to write tickets, and where
10 do they have to go if someone wants their day in court and
11 things like that.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: So we can look into that. Maybe we
13 need to better define the intent of the regulation. It sounds
14 like we already have authority but there is some other
15 reasoning behind that.

16 MR. HOLTZ: It is similar to how we listed -- for
17 instance, the National Shellfish Sanitation Program stuff in
18 the regs? It facilitates NRP enforcement. So to have
19 Maryland regs would just facilitate NRP enforcement is all.
20 We can come back with more if you would like.

21 MR. LYNCH: Thank you.

22 MR. HOLTZ: A couple of updates: We talked about
23 crayfish a lot last year. We initially talked about a
24 complete statewide ban on live crayfish. We have modified
25 what we are planning on going forward with, or at least as far

1 as scoping again.

2 So Pennsylvania and Virginia do allow for some live
3 possession, so what we have come up with is 50 crayfish a day
4 catch limit for personal use. All but five of those would
5 have to have their heads removed. So you would be allowed to
6 have five crayfish, five live crayfish that obviously kids
7 would be able to play with in their buckets or guys could use
8 for bait probably in the area where they are catching since
9 they only have five that have their heads on.

10 It would allow shipping of live crayfish in Maryland
11 for restaurants and personal consumption as long the crayfish
12 were accompanied by documentation stating the origin and
13 destination. It would require a permit for possession of live
14 crayfish for educational purposes. This would be like a
15 scientific collection. We already have that process in place.

16 And then we would prohibit the import and possession
17 of live crayfish by pet stores and bait shops, and prohibit
18 the commercial harvest of crayfish. Our current plan for
19 scoping is to again take this out on our Website and through
20 electronic means. Based on the discussions that we have had
21 and based on the scaled-back approach that we are now
22 considering, does this commission think that we should do
23 anything other than what our current plan is?

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Any comments for Jacob on that?

25 MS. DEAN: Really quick: We said prohibiting

1 commercial harvest but the presentation you guys gave us
2 showed that most of the crayfish that are now in Maryland are
3 not indigenous. So would it not be beneficial to allow a
4 harvest?

5 MR. HOLTZ: Tom?

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I think it is -- you know, you
7 think about blue catfish, you know, invasive. And we are, you
8 know, we are promoting the harvest. I think with crayfish,
9 you know, the conversation was even with crayfish, if you
10 allow the commercial harvest, it is probably going to
11 introduce a greater vector for spread and, you know, the
12 biologists that we spoke to thought that given the species --

13 But, yes, it is kind of like a species by species
14 case.

15 MS. DEAN: And right now as far as -- I know we have
16 had this conversation before. As far as we are aware, this
17 doesn't put anybody out of business right now so --

18 MR. HOLTZ: No. I mean, three years ago, I want to
19 say, it was about 115 pounds harvested. Two years ago it was
20 17 pounds and this past year we didn't have any reported.

21 MR. O'CONNELL: I will just add that one of reasons
22 we scaled back was in response to public comment about, you
23 know, fishermen's desires to use them for bait. And we
24 thought by allowing five they could possess them and it
25 doesn't provide a great incentive to leave that stream and

1 introduce them somewhere else.

2 The other thing that we think we think is it is very
3 important for these invasive species to have a regional
4 approach. And right now we don't have that. And there are a
5 couple organizations that deal with these issues on a regional
6 basis. And we thought about trying to get this issue on the
7 agenda to see if like Pennsylvania, Delaware, West
8 Virginia -- we can reach some commonality so one state doesn't
9 do something and say, well -- our constituents say, well, we
10 are doing it, we are getting impacted but the other states are
11 not, so what are we gaining?

12 So we think these are some good guardrails to put on
13 the situation and allow some more time to see if we can
14 develop a regional approach.

15 MR. HOLTZ: And last on the scoping list would be
16 the update to the Sport Fish and Tidal Fish Advisory
17 Commission regulations. You have an attachment for that reg.
18 There is something in your packet on that we drafted.

19 Currently the only thing that needs to be changed is
20 we just need to change the references to the tidewater
21 administration to the fisheries service. The regulations
22 haven't been changed for almost 20 years so that is an updated
23 reference.

24 The only other thing that we would point out is that
25 the operating guidelines that were adopted in 2009 called for

1 a two-year term for the chairperson. Both COMAR and the
2 statute, the Maryland Annotated Code, call for a one-year
3 term. This doesn't require us to change anything but we might
4 want to consider changing the operating guidelines to be in
5 line with the statute.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: So the issue there is do we want to
7 change the law that requires the chair to be two years rather
8 than one or we can change the operating guidelines to be one
9 year, recognizing that chairperson can be re-elected for a
10 second year. Any preferences on that? And one requires a
11 statutory change and the other --

12 MR. GRACIE: I would say change the operating
13 guidelines.

14 MR. O'CONNELL: I guess that is the easiest
15 approach.

16 MR. GRACIE: We might never succeed on the other
17 one.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: These days.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Any objection to just modifying,
20 with the understanding that the chair could be re-elected?

21 (No response)

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay, let's do that. Thanks. Is
23 that it?

24 MR. HOLTZ: That is it for the regulatory update and
25 scoping.

1 MR. GRACIE: I have a question on scoping, going all
2 the way back to the free fishing areas. Maybe I didn't hear
3 you right. Did you say you changed some of the areas after
4 their publication?

5 MR. HOLTZ: No.

6 MR. GRACIE: Oh, okay, because you can't do that.

7 MR. HOLTZ: No.

8 MR. GRACIE: You meant that what was promulgated was
9 the changes.

10 MR. HOLTZ: Yes.

11 MR. GRACIE: Okay. I didn't hear that right. Thank
12 you.

13 DR. MORGAN: I have one question.

14 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Yes? Hang on, Jacob.

15 DR. MORGAN: I noticed in the regulatory update that
16 it seems it be more leasing applications for land leasing, for
17 submerged land leasing for oysters. Has this been a big
18 increase over this last quarter?

19 MR. HOLTZ: I don't think it is a huge increase over
20 the last quarter.

21 DR. MORGAN: It seems like there were a lot more
22 than what we have had.

23 MR. : (away from microphone) Last quarter
24 for aquaculture leases?

25 DR. MORGAN: Yes.

1 MR. : There was a big increase from the
2 last year roughly.

3 MR. HOLTZ: So year over year it would be an
4 increase but as far as fourth quarter to third quarter I don't
5 think it is a massive increase.

6 MR. : Yes, it was. Third quarter, there
7 were very few new leases, I think. Fourth quarter came on and
8 the last four months have been pretty heavy with like 44 new
9 leases applied for, which is much more than the previous six
10 months, I would say.

11 MR. O'CONNELL: So, Ray, just to give you a
12 sense -- it looks like there is about a dozen in here. We
13 have issued 126 leases since 2010. And, you know, we do
14 have -- it would be good just to touch on this. We do have
15 some newly developing conflicts on the water with clamming
16 activity.

17 With the oysters, the oyster bars are defined, but
18 with clamming they are not. So when you go through the
19 screening process, the department and the applicant, it is not
20 really clear on where the clamming is. Clam harvest reports
21 are very broad right now so our Aquaculture Division Manager
22 Karl Rosher has been working with the Aquaculture Coordinating
23 Council and Robert T. Brown, president of MWA, Maryland
24 Watermen's Association.

25 And we have requested and they have agreed to kind

1 of put together a spatial map of where the important clamming
2 areas are, and we can get that into the GIS database when we
3 prescreen applications. And also to have a representative
4 within each county that we can go to, to get political advice
5 and also try to get more spatially specific harvest data.

6 So we will try to address some of those conflicts
7 going forward.

8 MR. GRACIE: Would a clamming area automatically
9 rule out a lease for aquaculture?

10 MR. O'CONNELL: Not necessarily but --

11 MR. GRACIE: Then what is the point then?

12 MR. O'CONNELL: I think it helps -- first I guess if
13 it is one of the very important clamming areas it will let the
14 applicant know that there is going to be conflict and
15 encourage him to look elsewhere.

16 If he decides to go forward, he knows that there is
17 a conflict, and through the process the state is going to have
18 to, you know, look at pros and cons of the two --
19 the current fishery.

20 MR. GRACIE: You are maintaining the discretion to
21 make a decision --

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. Now, you know, there could be
23 some criteria that are developed that if an area has so much
24 harvest over some period of time, it is off limits. You know,
25 that is kind of -- the dialogue is happening now.

1 MR. GRACIE: It is going to get tough.

2 MR. O'CONNELL: And there is a little bit more with
3 crabbing. I think Rachel probably is aware of some of these
4 issues, right? So I guess it is kind of expected when you
5 start parsing out bay bottom.

6 MS. DEAN: Has any lease been turned down for that
7 reason?

8 MR. O'CONNELL: You know, I don't know of any. I
9 know that there are some in the Choptank that are on hold
10 right now.

11 MS. DEAN: I only asked because we did, Calvert
12 County, submit objection to a lease, and that was for a trot
13 line area, not clamming. As far as I know, you know, our
14 concerns are that you -- it seems to be that the discretion
15 errs on the side of the leases.

16 MR. GRACIE: Well, yes, I guess, since we are trying
17 to promote that.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, it is a difficult one, and
19 hopefully going forward we can at least have better
20 information going into the application and try to mitigate
21 some of these concerns better.

22 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Ed?

23 MR. O'BRIEN: Before we get off scoping, a couple
24 notes I made: I know the watermen meet more often than
25 recreational groups do in concert, like we are doing right now

1 on this commission. On the minimum size of 18 inches, has the
2 department made a decision yet as to just how they are going
3 to allocate the watermen's catch relative to 18 inches or 20
4 inches?

5 We have brought this up in the past and,
6 particularly in the summertime, there could be a real conflict
7 out there. If hook and liners are able to keep, you know, an
8 18-inch fish and we are sitting right beside them and we have
9 got to go to 20.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: It is going to be a topic on the
11 Tidal Fish Advisory Commission agenda. We did submit a
12 proposal to ASMFC that would allow them to stay at 18 inches,
13 and a conservational equivalent to require them to go 20
14 inches. There are only about a 3,000 pound -- is it a 3,000
15 pound, Mike, or 30 -- very small quota increase if the
16 industry wants to go to 20 inches.

17 At this point in time, my advice to the department
18 is to allow the industry to choose which option they want to
19 go to and assess what level of conflict is going to occur this
20 summer.

21 With the striped bass commercial fishery going to an
22 ITQ fishery, the hook-and-line effort is more dispersed than
23 in the past, and there are still going to be some conflicts
24 out there but I think it is going to be less than we have had
25 when we had a derby fishery, when the hook-and-line fishery

1 opened up for a month and everybody got out there.

2 But at this point in time, it is not a conservation
3 issue, and we are leaning toward tidal fish to advise us on
4 which option they want to choose, and my feedback I have
5 received is they want to stay at 18 inches right now. So we
6 have put forth that recommendation.

7 MR. GRACIE: Well, if there is a conservational
8 equivalency, wouldn't that also apply to the recreational
9 fishery to go to 18?

10 MR. O'CONNELL: The commercial fishery has to have a
11 20 percent reduction. And there is very little conservation
12 benefit between 20 and 18. For the recreational, in order to
13 get 20 percent reduction, we have to, you know, go to a
14 20-inch fish.

15 MS. DEAN: I just wanted to weigh in on it because I
16 understand you want to talk about it at the Tidal Fish
17 Advisory Commission. And I think one of the things that we
18 really wanted to hear was if the recreational sector was being
19 afforded a conservation equivalency by going 18 to 20.

20 And my understanding would be it is quite a bit if
21 they don't have to reduce creel to move from 18 to 20. We
22 were hoping that we would be afforded that same opportunity.
23 When we asked what that would be to go from an 18 to 20 to
24 mitigate that impact of the conflict, it was so minimal that
25 it was quite frankly pretty upsetting that it would be that

1 small yet the recreational was afforded an opportunity.

2 So I understand the conflict but I appreciate the
3 opportunity to say that as the commercial fishery, if we
4 choose to go this route, we would hope that you would be
5 understanding that we didn't get the same kickback from being
6 willing to accept that 20-inch fish.

7 MR. O'BRIEN: Decision to be made.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, at this point in time, if the
9 commercial guys want to stay at 18 inches, that is what we are
10 going to be recommending to the department, so -- and we will
11 assess it this summer to see how significant the conflicts
12 become. And if it becomes significant, we will have to
13 re-evaluate.

14 MR. O'BRIEN: Any chance you would do it on a
15 gear-type basis? In other words, maybe the net size and all
16 fits into it? Maybe go to the 18 inches for the netters and
17 then on the hook and line, you would go to 20.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Mike, correct me if I am wrong, but
19 I think with the ITQ fishery, one of the benefits is the ITQ
20 person can use any gear type.

21 So the question becomes how does NRP differentiate a
22 fish being caught hook and line with maybe a 20-inch size
23 limit, and a pound net and gill net, which is 18 inches? You
24 know, a hook and liner can go to a pound net, you know, and
25 vice versa, so it is an enforcement issue that is challenging.

1 But that -- you know, that may be something to
2 consider as we go forward if we see the conflicts be
3 significant this summer.

4 MR. O'BRIEN: Because it is going to come up again.

5 MR. GRACIE: How will you measure the conflicts?

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Well, you know, it is a little bit
7 from listening to the stakeholders. NRP might have some
8 feedback on that, getting calls that go out there. Mike, do
9 you remember -- can you just, do you remember, you know, how
10 many hook and liners are out on the water. You have some
11 information? Maybe Mike, you can come up and just introduce
12 yourself for the record and shed some light on that.

13 MR. LUISI: Hi. Mike Luisi, DNR Fisheries Service,
14 estuarine and marine fisheries director. I don't have it in
15 front of me right now but as far as conflict with hook and
16 liners on the water, given the new direction we have taken
17 with the new ITQ system, we were able to compare trips and the
18 amount of effort -- the amount of effort on the water from
19 2014 as compared to 2013.

20 And what we saw was in 2013, there was an -- on the
21 day that the commercial hook-and-line season was open, if you
22 remember, it was under a derby fishery so there were very few
23 days a week open and allowed for commercial hook-and-line
24 fishing to take place.

25 But when it was open, there were on average

1 about -- the number is like around 60, 60 to 65 permit holders
2 fishing on any given day. When we compared that to the new
3 system under the ITQ, the average dropped to about 10 permit
4 holders per day. And that was due to the fact that instead of
5 having two days a week open each day of the month until a
6 closure happened, the number of days available for fishing in
7 2014 expanded ten-fold.

8 Rather than being restricted to, let's say, 40 days
9 for the entire summer, it was 150, 200 days. It was almost
10 every day of the summer, Monday through Friday from June
11 through November 30th, and we can calculate that number.

12 So there were a lot less striped bass hook and
13 liners on the water per day throughout the course of the
14 season. I think that is what --

15 MR. O'BRIEN: And Mike, you are talking about 2014.

16 MR. LUISI: Yes, compared to '13, which was the old
17 system under the derby fishery.

18 MR. O'BRIEN: Well, I have seen it different than
19 the numbers you described but, you know, it is something that
20 you are going to be kicking around with commercial. And I am
21 sure they would understand where we are coming from.

22 (Show of hand)

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: On that, Jim, or something else?

24 MR. GRACIE: It is on that.

25 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay.

1 MR. GRACIE: So as I understand it, the only
2 objective measure you have for conflict is the number of
3 commercial fishermen out per day. If there are more, you
4 assume more conflict?

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Not necessarily. You know, just
6 because there is --

7 MR. GRACIE: If there is less, you assume less
8 conflict?

9 MR. O'CONNELL: No, I guess I don't think you can
10 assess it based upon effort.

11 MR. GRACIE: So I still don't understand how you
12 measure conflict.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Well, you know, when things are,
14 when there are things on the water that are not -- when there
15 are conflicts on the water, we hear about them. So I think we
16 are going to be gauging it based upon the response we get from
17 charter boat fishermen, private anglers, and we may be able to
18 get a little bit from Natural Resources Police.

19 Years ago when I was involved with the coastal bays,
20 we were looking at hydraulic clamming, you know, conflicts
21 with other users of the coastal bays. You know, NRP --

22 MR. GRACIE: You mean when the water got muddy and
23 nobody could catch fish everywhere?

24 MR. O'CONNELL: That is one of them. In some
25 areas -- I mean there were some areas that hydraulic clamming,

1 I think, could have continued but the legislature got involved
2 on that one. So but NRP does get calls with complaints, and
3 we can talk with them about seeing if they can monitor that.
4 But it is going to be a largely subjective call, Jim.

5 MR. GRACIE: Okay.

6 MR. O'BRIEN: And the other scoping thing I wanted
7 to bring up was blue catfish.

8 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Ed, I am sorry. Before we leave
9 striped bass, just so everybody knows, the tidal fish
10 commission meeting, when that discussion will take place, is
11 this Thursday, same timeframe, 2:00 p.m., same place, this
12 room.

13 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you. At one time I was living
14 in Missouri. And I saw then how this blue catfish thing could
15 take off. Being an officer of the national Charter Boat
16 Association, it is a significant discussion about how the blue
17 catfish is moving up the Mississippi, moving into all of these
18 rivers. You know, they seem to be taking over some of these
19 estuaries.

20 Down the Potomac it seem like -- the upper Potomac,
21 the guides there seem to be very worried about it. And I
22 don't know, it just seems like there should be more publicity
23 on this, on blue catfish. We talk about snakeheads all the
24 time.

25 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, will it is -- I know the bay

1 program structure is a sustainable fisheries goal
2 implementation team --- that chairs, my vice chair, and blue
3 catfish has been a topic of conversation almost every single
4 meeting.

5 And a group of scientists has come up with a
6 recommendation, and it went through the Bay Program Scientific
7 and Technical Advisory Committee Review just recently. And we
8 had a call yesterday, and we talked about it.

9 And, you know, in Maryland there is a strong
10 advocacy to promote and harvest blue catfish. And our
11 marketing director, Steve Vilnit, has been working with a lot
12 of the harvesters and seafood dealers to do so.

13 Tim Suhgrue with Congressional Seafood, for example,
14 they are looking at a huge expansion in Jessup, looking at
15 purchasing fileting machines and working with Whole Foods to
16 develop a national market for blue catfish. There are some
17 health consumption advisories but you can harvest fish less
18 than 30 inches within those advisories.

19 So, you know, we are looking to -- we really see
20 this as an opportunity to do something good for the
21 environment but also good for the economics of the watermen.
22 And more guys are getting into it. You know, some of the
23 scientists are concerned that after a population reaches kind
24 of an equilibrium, that if you knock it down, it actually can
25 increase productivity.

1 We have to knock this population down to a level
2 where we mitigate some of the ecological impacts, and I really
3 see this fishery as a fishery of opportunity. We don't want
4 people to start making so much money that once they start
5 knocking the population down, they are asking for, well, we
6 need a sustainable management plan.

7 You know we want this --

8 (Laughter)

9 MR. O'CONNELL: It happens. And that is one of the
10 dangers with invasives. But we want to have the industry see
11 that when the population is up, it is an opportunity to shift
12 to it and knock it down, make some economics. And when it
13 becomes not economically feasible to fish, you lay off of it,
14 and the population is going to bounce back at some point.
15 Jump back on it and try to knock it down.

16 You mentioned the Potomac. They are getting to
17 become widespread. A lot of report this winter of them in the
18 Choptank River. They are in the Naticoke. They are all
19 through the upper bay. And it is a serious problem. I
20 appreciate your bringing it up. I think some of the sports
21 fish associations are getting more involved to advocate, you
22 know, harvest.

23 There is a trophy recreational fishery that likes to
24 catch and release these big fish. And that is something that
25 we do not encourage. The Virginia Department of Inland Game

1 and Fisheries, which introduced the species in the '70s to
2 promote recreational fishing -- that was at a time that a lot
3 of invasive introduction was occurring -- they are reluctant
4 to advocate the commercial fishery right now. So -- Roger?

5 MR. TRAGESER: Question: There is a -- correct me
6 if I am wrong -- there is a regulation in place, Maryland has
7 a regulation that says you cannot possess a snakehead unless
8 it is dead. There is no such regulation in place for blue
9 cats.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: No.

11 MR. O'BRIEN: Well, you know, we all sat here
12 when -- well, not we all. The old people, like me. Catfish
13 Nation made a presentation to us I guess about seven or eight
14 years ago, and what they were promoting was their tournaments
15 and what a wonderful fishery this was in West Virginia. Maybe
16 it was Virginia too.

17 And, you know, the clue was there when they said,
18 you know, that hopefully blue catfish could thrive in other
19 waters. And then it seemed like they started showing up more
20 and more. And the suspicion was among several people that I
21 talked to that they were sort of planting them in other words.

22 And so that was quite an effort back then. I am glad
23 that you are on top of it to the degree you are. And I really
24 hope it is something we are going to be hearing more and more
25 about in our river system.

1 MR. O'CONNELL: You remember a lady named Bevin from
2 the Chesapeake Bay Commission came to the sport fish
3 commission last meeting about introducing a bill to make a
4 stiffer penalty for someone who was caught transporting these
5 things. And a financial reward if someone provided
6 information that led to, you know, the citation of somebody
7 illegally importing them.

8 You know, one of the issues that -- I think one of
9 the challenges that we have is, you know, fish above 30
10 inches, it is advised not to consume. So as you try to
11 encourage people to remove these things, you know, we are
12 struggling with finding an answer to what they do with them.

13 If you can't consume them -- I mean, obviously some
14 people take them back home and put them in a compost but not
15 everybody has that opportunity to do that. So one of the
16 challenges is trying to find, you know, a way to dispose of
17 those big fish easily to encourage people to do that.

18 MR. O'BRIEN: I am not only worried about little
19 black bass, I am worried about little rockfish. Is CCA on top
20 of this one?

21 MR. SIKORSKI: Yes, we have some folks
22 tracking, working with the department to promote -- you know,
23 you bring up those fish over 30 inches, and it reminds of
24 something that has been bouncing around Facebook in regard to
25 the --- rays. It was in this article that was published

1 recently. It showed a guy on a beach with a bunch of --- rays
2 and a bow in his hands. The fishery has been pretty popular.

3 And the article was written claiming the slaughter
4 of pregnant female rays and that they are a species of concern
5 and all these kinds of things. A lot of the article is
6 misguided.

7 But the same type of thing may happen, you know,
8 when you have these fish and they catch -- we want to kill
9 them. We want to get them out of the system but it becomes a
10 political kind of football. What do we do with the fish that
11 we harvest and kill? We have got to have some use for it.

12 It is a sticky situation, and, you know, it comes
13 from people who are anti-harvest of wild game or fish.

14 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So, Tom, are we interested in
15 getting a STAC report back before entertaining regulatory
16 options? Is that a fair statement?

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, so we got the STAC report. And
18 then the bay program, catfish scientists reviewed it and just
19 yesterday sent a letter back with the scientists' response to
20 the peer review of it.

21 So the focus now is how do we go forward? We have
22 got some scientific recommendations. A lot of time with
23 scientists, they want to put more and more money into research
24 and all that. I tell you, one of the biggest holes right now
25 is Congressional Seafood and others are looking for some

1 grants or some funding to invest in about \$500,000 of fileting
2 machines.

3 And what they are trying to do -- this fishery
4 operates like it is, spring and fall is when the majority of
5 the harvest is. And what they are trying to do is they are
6 trying to find a year-round market. So they want to be able
7 to get the fishermen out there when the fish are available,
8 then they want to be able to filet them efficiently because
9 right now they are just being fileted by manpower.

10 And then they also want to get the vacuum packaging
11 and the freezer machines so then they can, you know, freeze
12 these things and have them available year round. And Whole
13 Foods has been experimenting with these fish in the local --
14 the regional grocery stores.

15 And it is really interesting. I went to the one in
16 Philadelphia with Tim Suhgrue. They had side by side wild
17 blue catfish and farm-raised catfish. And both of them were
18 selling for \$9.99. And we talked to the seafood manager, and
19 he said the consumers are just loving the wild blue catfish.

20 And what they like about it is both sell for \$9.99.
21 The farm-raised they are buying for \$8.99. It is only \$1
22 profit. And the wild is \$4.99. So their profitability is
23 much higher on the wild catfish. So they have been working
24 with Congressional Seafood in trying to get a national product
25 available.

1 Tim feels like he needs to develop that market in
2 order to get the fishermen to invest in going out and catching
3 them. So it is almost like you need to develop that market
4 first.

5 And I know on the Potomac River Fisheries Commission
6 agenda at the next meeting I think they are looking at some
7 potential rule-making to allow a different gear type to be
8 used for harvesting commercial catfish. I haven't heard
9 details about it but Billy Rice mentioned that to me this
10 morning.

11 So there is a lot of focus on it. Not enough.
12 Rachel?

13 MS. DEAN: I would be interested in a regulation
14 about not being allowed to keep them live, but I just also
15 want to put it in the commission's ear that I know that there
16 are commercial harvesters, that waiting on the truck to come,
17 and they do hold them live and pen them live. So we have to
18 kind of keep that in mind. But that would certainly be
19 something I would support as well.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Maybe on a future agenda item this
21 year we can get a review of what the recommendations are and
22 put our heads together and see what else we can do.

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Sounds good. Anything else on
24 regulatory matters for Jacob?

25 (No response)

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Well, good. Thanks, Jim. Okay,
2 let's see. Let's move on to the Estuarine and Marine
3 Fisheries Management Planning. We are going to switch up and
4 do Menhaden first. Lynn?

5 ***Estuarine and Marine Fisheries Management Planning***

6 ***Atlantic Menhaden***

7 ***by Lynn Fegley, MD DNR Fisheries Service***

8 MS. FEGLEY: Hi, everybody. I am Lynn Fegley.
9 Menhaden, the ASMFC Menhaden Management Board will meet on
10 Tuesday, February 3rd. I think we have about four hours
11 scheduled on the agenda. And the intent of this meeting is to
12 review the results of a new stock assessment that has just
13 been completed along with a peer review.

14 For those who have seen the news or the trailers
15 from ASMFC, it is fairly interesting. It does change the
16 picture of stock status. So where the previous stock
17 assessment had shown that we were in a situation of
18 overfishing, that is no longer the case.

19 So nobody has really had a chance to digest the full
20 document or the peer review. It just came out but we will
21 hear a detailed report from both the scientists who did the
22 study and also from the peer review scientists themselves with
23 the intent of having a detailed discussion on next steps.

24 So that is really sort of it in a nutshell. No
25 details yet to date. It is going to be an interesting

1 discussion.

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Questions for Lynn?

3 (No response)

4 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: While she is up here, we are
5 going to take the other agenda item she is the lead on, and
6 that is the middle one there under this item, the preseason
7 catch-and-release fishery. We had asked for more information
8 on this last time.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: So just -- at the last meeting,
10 there were two topics: One is preseason catch and release,
11 and the other one was the required use of circle hooks for
12 bait for striped bass.

13 We need a little bit more time putting together
14 information on that one, so we are going to try to get that to
15 your spring meeting. But in regard to preseason catch and
16 release, it kind of was a split, some split perspectives on
17 what to do, and the commission suggested we pull together some
18 information to bring back to decide if the commission would
19 like us to consider scoping any rule changes.

20 So Lynn is going to give an overview of where we
21 were and just some updates on the information.

22 ***Striped Bass Preseason Catch-and-Release Fishery***

23 ***by Lynn Fegley, MD DNR Fisheries Service***

24 MS. FEGLEY: Yes, so just to be clear, the
25 presentation in your packet is dated 2009, which is when we

1 | went through this process the last time. So really what we
2 | decided to do after thinking it through, we don't really have
3 | a lot of new information. In fact, we have no new
4 | information.

5 | And in 2009, we had what was a really good
6 | discussion. We had some concerns about increasing effort
7 | during the preseason catch and release and potential impacts
8 | on the stock. So we went through a very extensive public
9 | process to try to understand how to address this issue given
10 | what we know and what we don't know.

11 | So what this presentation is just going to do is
12 | essentially step us back through that. We don't have any new
13 | information, so you will just see the information that we had
14 | then. So maybe just transport yourselves back in time to the
15 | scoping meetings that we held six years ago, which is kind of
16 | stunning that it was that long ago.

17 | (Slide)

18 | And what we did was we wanted to get public comment.
19 | We were very interested in what we could do about this
20 | preseason problem. Go ahead, Paul.

21 | (Slide)

22 | And so what we did was we tried to come up with a
23 | clear definition of the problem. And we took all of the
24 | concerns that we heard from stakeholders and tried to address
25 | each one of them in turn with what we know that is fact and

1 | what we really are still uncertain about. And none of those
2 | things have particularly changed in the last six years.

3 | And then we also will address what our role as an
4 | agency was on this issue, and I don't believe that has changed
5 | either. And then we presented some management options. So go
6 | ahead, Paul.

7 | (Slide)

8 | So we had people come to us with concerns about
9 | rising effort in the preseason catch and release, about it
10 | becoming a real event, and more and more effort getting out
11 | there. And we defined that preseason as March 1st through the
12 | third Friday in April, recognizing that the striped fishery
13 | starts on the third Saturday in April. Go ahead, Paul.

14 | (Slide)

15 | So just to fast forward -- I am going to travel
16 | through these pretty quickly. Go ahead.

17 | (Slide)

18 | So one of the concerns that we had that really
19 | brought this to the forefront six years ago was this idea that
20 | there were a lot of boats out there, that effort was
21 | increasing. And when we looked at this in 2009, you can see
22 | that red line on the graph is the number of trips. This is
23 | from MRIP, at the time MRFSS.

24 | And sure enough when we looked at the data, what we
25 | saw was a line, number of trips steadily increasing. The way

1 the waves are calculated, we couldn't necessarily tease out
2 the preseason from the first part of the trophy season but
3 recognizing we definitely had an increasing number of trips.

4 Interestingly, after 2009 the effort dropped right
5 off again. Discards, which is the blue line, and harvest,
6 which is the green line, we haven't seen a lot of trends in
7 that since 2009. So essentially effort was increasing. That
8 doesn't appear to be an issue anymore. It is just bouncing
9 around. Go ahead, Paul.

10 (Slide)

11 We heard that release mortality -- a lot of concerns
12 about the release mortality during preseason catch and
13 release. We are handling all these fish and we are throwing
14 them back. And that has got to be detrimental to these big
15 females we are trying to protect.

16 We know that release mortality is influenced by
17 physiological injury -- by physical injury and by
18 physiological stress. So basically handling and the
19 environmental conditions are going to heavily influence the
20 mortality rate on these fish. Go ahead, Paul.

21 (Slide)

22 So these are what we know and what we don't know
23 about catch-and-release mortality during this time of year.
24 We have no studies that we know of on release mortality on
25 large prespawn -- I think that should say prespawn striped

1 bass caught trolling the Chesapeake Bay.

2 We have a lot of great catch-and-release studies but
3 none with that particular gear and that particular time period
4 on that particular size and life phase of fish. We do know
5 though just by logic that if effort is increasing, the release
6 mortality is going to also increase, the discard mortality.

7 We do use an estimate of release mortality during
8 that time period of 0.8 percent, and that is simply based on
9 other studies that show that when the temperatures are cool,
10 the water is salty, that is a hook-and-line release mortality.

11 And we also know that deep hooking is rare in
12 trolling, and they are using artificial lures. So that is
13 basically just a rundown of what we know. Go ahead, Paul.

14 (Slide)

15 And we also know that some gear types, including
16 stinger hooks, and the use of excessive gear can increase the
17 chance of physical injury. So stinger hooks have more chance
18 of damaging the fish as does fishing more gear than maybe you
19 can handle, if you have a lot of fish hanging off your lines
20 at the same time.

21 The next concern was even if a female fish doesn't
22 die when she is released, she may do what we call fall back.
23 She may abort her spawny run and leave and not spawn. That is
24 something that is not well determined in the literature.

25 We do know that 84 percent of the fish harvest in

1 the trophy season are female. That is the trophy season, not
2 the preseason.

3 On average, between 2002 and 2014, half of the
4 females were not yet spawned or pre-spawned, and again because
5 the information we have is from the trophy season, preseason
6 catch and releases earlier, we would estimate that the
7 fraction of pre-spawn fish that we encounter in a preseason
8 catch and release would be 75 percent, over 75 percent.

9 (Slide)

10 So just to end that concern about fall-back
11 behavior, we really don't know -- this remains an uncertainty.
12 We don't know the degree to which this fall-back behavior
13 happens. And really there have been a lot of studies done on
14 this and they do show mixed results depending on the species
15 and where you are looking in the world. Go ahead, Paul.

16 (Slide)

17 We can skip through that. This was in 2009 talking
18 about stock effects on our preseason catch and release, which
19 would not be particularly significant. This graph shows the
20 trajectory of spiny stock biomass from the coastwide stock
21 assessment. Given the scale of our fishery and the discard
22 mortality that would happen it would not be a significant
23 impact on stock size. Go ahead.

24 (Slide)

25 That is just an update of the JI, where we are in

1 stock. And let's go -- so let's go to the end. Go ahead.
2 Fast forward through this.

3 (Slide)

4 So this one -- so back in 2009, having reviewed
5 everything we know and everything we don't know, the fact that
6 we had an increase in effort and we had potential mishandling
7 of the fish preseason, the next step is our role, and the DNR
8 position is that it is our responsibility to make sure that
9 this resource is used responsibly.

10 We still want to foster access and opportunity, and
11 we also want to exercise caution in case where we have impacts
12 that are uncertain. And could be irreversible or damaging.

13 So that was sort of where we found ourselves in
14 2009, which, if you remember, was a pretty controversial
15 discussion. So these were basically the principles that we
16 established in order to guide us through all these facts and
17 uncertainties I just rattled off. What do we do?

18 And what we did was put in place guardrails -- go
19 ahead, Paul.

20 (Slide)

21 So we did consider at that time given the rising
22 effort in trips, given the uncertainty of those sub-lethal
23 impacts -- that is the fall-back behavior. And also where we
24 were in 2009 where we started to have that dip in the spawning
25 stock biomass. We all know where that took us this year as we

1 face the 20-percent reduction.

2 We decided that we did not want to maintain status
3 quo. And the next step is what do we do? That is a
4 responsible guardrail for this preseason catch and release.
5 And if you remember, we talked about things like limiting
6 days. We talked about closures. We talked about all kinds of
7 things. But what we finally wound up doing -- go ahead, Paul.

8 (Slide)

9 We proposed several options. One of them was
10 prohibiting stinger hooks. Just take away the stinger hooks.
11 Or catching and releasing -- we are not catching and killing
12 right now. That can be damaging so we propose that we
13 prohibit those. We have done that.

14 Prohibit the use of bait unless circle hooks are
15 required. I do not believe that went into our regulatory
16 package. We did limit the number of lines to six per boat.
17 So rather than limiting the number of days, we now say that in
18 this time of year you can only have six lines on your boat,
19 and that is to eliminate trying to handle a bunch of fish at
20 the same time and increasing your release mortality.

21 I do not believe that we went forward with the
22 barbless hook requirement but we also suggested that
23 increasing outreach and education on catch-and-release
24 techniques would be beneficial. And that is where we ended
25 at.

1 And so that is where we are. We do have guardrails
2 in place now because of that 2009 discussion, and here we are
3 again.

4 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Questions for Lynn?

5 *Questions and Answers*

6 MR. DEHOFF: Looking at that chart, it appeared that
7 after 2009, the amount of effort has dropped back to the
8 pre-catch and release discussion levels.

9 MS. FEGLEY: It is the first graph, Paul.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: So it looks like the guardrails that
11 we put in place, you know, brought the fishery back in line.

12 MR. DEHOFF: And at least by effort there it looks
13 as though whatever actions were taken curbed the effort. Now
14 by that effort I don't know -- that is as total number of
15 trips, so -- but just by the mere fact that they can only pull
16 six lines, they just weren't going to go, is what that is
17 telling us.

18 And it looks like that we are down to probably
19 around 60 percent of what we were in the 8 or 10 years prior
20 to that. So it looks like what we have been doing has
21 certainly had an effect on it. But like you said, what we
22 don't know are those nonlethal, sub-lethal effects that we
23 can't quantify.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Anyone else?

25 MR. LANGLEY: Yes. Geographically, as far as catch

1 and release, can you, could you pinpoint what areas of the
2 bay, whether it is the upper bay or whether it is the
3 mainstream of the bay most of the focus or attention was in
4 catch and releasing?

5 MS. FEGLEY: I think it was lower, wasn't it?

6 MR. O'CONNELL: I am not sure.

7 MS. FEGLEY: I seem to recall that it was lower but,
8 you know, we have to go back and look through some of
9 our -- and maybe somebody else might remember where the
10 specific area of concern was but I don't remember
11 specifically.

12 MR. WOMMACK: Was it the Susquehanna? Up in the
13 flats?

14 MR. GRACIE: No, it was mid-bay to lower bay as I
15 recall.

16 (Simultaneous conversation)

17 MR. O'BRIEN: Bottom line: What you came up with
18 worked.

19 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Any other comments? Questions?

20 (No response)

21 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, well, the other thing we
22 asked them about, the use of circle hooks for bait, we will be
23 talking about the next meeting, right?

24 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, that is what we are shooting
25 for.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I think -- someone correct me if
2 I am wrong, but in the text under this agenda item, where it
3 says desired outcome, that last sentence that goes over to the
4 next page, the commission's request for more information on
5 the use offset circle hooks. I believe that should be
6 non-offset, just FYI.

7 All right, so let's move on to the next
8 item -- thank you, Lynn -- which will be you, Tom, right?
9 Striped bass management.

10 ***Striped Bass Management***

11 ***by Tom O'Connell, Director, MD DNR Fisheries Service***

12 MR. O'CONNELL: All right, so two items on the
13 striped bass management for 2015: the first one I was asked to
14 give an update on the department's consideration for an appeal
15 to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

16 We are in the process of preparing arguments for an
17 appeal. We -- the way the commission process works is that an
18 appeal needs to be submitted 45 days prior to the commission
19 meeting. So in order for this to be heard at next week's
20 meeting, we would have had to have submitted the appeal in
21 mid-December.

22 At that point in time, we were in the midst of
23 transition information, preparation, meetings, so we had
24 decided to not consider submitting the appeal until the May
25 meeting. This will also allow us to brief the new

1 administration to ensure that they know what direction they
2 want to take with this.

3 It is also giving our staff a little bit more time
4 to make sure we put forth the best arguments possible. Lastly
5 is this issue was brought up at the Potomac River Fisheries
6 Commission. And there seemed to be a majority of people who
7 would support PRFC joining the appeal with us.

8 The Virginia Marine Resources Commission stated at
9 that time that they would be reluctant to go forward with an
10 appeal. However, some of their stakeholders are now
11 encouraging them to reconsider. So ideally if we go forward
12 with an appeal, it would be a three-bay jurisdictional effort.

13 So where we are is that staff are working on the
14 arguments. Hope to have a draft in late February. Be able to
15 brief the administration and decide whether or not we want to
16 submit it for the May meeting.

17 If the appeal is submitted, the executive -- I am
18 sorry, the chairman of the commission and the vice chairman,
19 currently Louis Daniel from North Carolina and Doug Grout from
20 New Hampshire, review the appeal and determine if it has merit
21 with the criteria that the commission has set up.

22 I will mention that Delaware submitted an appeal in
23 mid-December based upon the actions that were taken on their
24 fishery. And the chairman and vice chairman determined it did
25 not have merit.

1 Now we have different and I believe stronger
2 arguments than Delaware so that shouldn't be a signal, but
3 know that, you know, while we have a lot of arguments, how
4 they fit into the specific criteria is going to be a question,
5 and, you know, you guys recall that the majority of the board
6 was supportive of the actions that were taken. So we have a
7 lot of convincing to do.

8 If we are successful with the appeal, our
9 understanding is that we would submit an alternative plan for
10 consideration. And if approved we could then implement for
11 the remainder of our summer/fall season. So just because it
12 is going to May still provides us the time to make the
13 adjustments if we get something else.

14 You know, we need to discuss what the alternative is
15 going to be. You know, there were some who advocated for a
16 three-year phase in and taking all the reduction up front.
17 And that would be a 17 percent reduction where we end up with
18 20 percent.

19 So, you know, if we look at that option, we are
20 going three years, we take all the actions the first year, we
21 don't really gain much because it still puts us at 20 inches
22 because 19 inches doesn't give us enough for the reduction.
23 The commercial industry would get 3 percent back.

24 One alternative is to go with the phased-in, 3-year
25 plan, 7 percent, 7 percent, 7 percent. That would allow us to

1 go to like a 19-inch fish for 2 years and then 20. Maybe the
2 more favorable alternative is that the commission's Technical
3 Committee has been working on the bay reference points, and
4 there is a chance that they would have some ideas to come
5 before the board in May.

6 And if the board accepted some of those, we could
7 agree to go back to the bay reference point and then we would
8 have to see where we are. And that could be plus or minus,
9 you know, 7 percent.

10 So obviously we have got to work through those
11 issues but we are working on the appeal. We will present it
12 to the new administration and we will discuss the opportunity
13 to share it with this body for advice as we go forward.

14 MR. GRACIE: I am not familiar with the appeal
15 process. Explain something to me: Would you appeal on the
16 basis of certain issues, certain parts of that?

17 MR. O'CONNELL: There are five criteria. I have got
18 to try to remember them. One of them is the best available
19 science was not utilized. One of them is unforeseen impact.
20 And, you know, one of the issues that we would like to raise
21 is the lack of an economic assessment of the different
22 options, and the impacts maybe are more severe than predicted.

23 I think fairness is a criteria. And there are a
24 couple more. I don't know if staff remember them off the
25 top --

1 MR. GRACIE: I am not sure that was my question.

2 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay.

3 MR. GRACIE: My question is what parts of the
4 determination would you say -- would you have to say we want
5 this to be this because of that? There will be criteria for
6 an appeal but what changes would you ask for in an appeal?
7 Would you tell them to start all over again?

8 MR. O'CONNELL: The science is very clear that the
9 reduction to the larger fish is needed. Our spring trophy and
10 the coastal fishery. So at this point in time, we are not
11 looking to appeal the actions taken on the large fish.

12 MR. GRACIE: Okay.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Our focus would be on the
14 bay-resident fishery.

15 MR. GRACIE: But there is no science that -- there
16 is no clear science that says we need to reduce that summer
17 harvest.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: That is correct, at least to the
19 degree of 20 percent.

20 MR. O'BRIEN: We have got some charter boat captains
21 here, and we are very appreciative of the fact that you have
22 appealed. That morning meeting, it was very clear this was
23 going against us. In the advisors' meeting, the northern
24 states really felt they had us on the run. They had a letter
25 from SCCA which disagreed with the position you were taking,

1 taking it over three years.

2 And for the record, it is on the record, the
3 gentleman from Maine, when I was defending Maryland's position
4 and saying that the fishery wasn't as bad as was being
5 depicted at that meeting, he made a comment, it was on the
6 record, that we know that the last rockfish caught will be in
7 Maryland.

8 And he was from Maine, and that made an impression
9 on some people, and some people thought it was great that he
10 put it that way.

11 But the conflict was really rising, and we feel, the
12 Maryland Charter Boat Association, that in this whole thing,
13 we have been screwed. And the reason being is there are so
14 many charter boat dollars out there, and people are going to
15 go where they can catch a big fish. Some people will. Some
16 people won't. They will stay with us.

17 But here you have got Virginia now that is
18 definitely going to be a 28-inch fish. Then you have got New
19 Jersey, which is a very, very important constituency to
20 certain of our upper bay captains. And they are going to
21 have, in some cases, 3 fish. Delaware also is in competition
22 with us, not to that degree, but we are really up against it
23 in this.

24 Maryland has been put at a deficiency relative to
25 these, which comes down to the ASMFC. But particularly it is

1 the charter boats that are going to get hurt. And the
2 recreational fishermen adjust to this much better than we do.
3 We are in business. And the commercial fishermen, that is
4 different.

5 MR. WOMMACK: I agree 100 percent with Ed and what
6 he is saying because at the rate it looks like Maryland is
7 going, you are going to put all the charter boats and
8 everything out of business because you will have
9 Virginia -- and if we are going to be on a level, we need to
10 be on the same level that they are playing on because they are
11 getting these fish first.

12 You shorten our season until the 15th, those fish
13 are not even showing up at the Chesapeake until late --
14 sometimes even after the 31st. They are just getting them in
15 Virginia. So we are completely in -- up the bay with less
16 fish coming to us, and we get more and more restrictions, and
17 I don't think that is fair. I think you really need to look
18 at this again for Maryland.

19 MR. O'BRIEN: Tom and Bill defended us vociferously.
20 You know, the cards were stacked when it came starting with
21 Maine right down the coast. New York seemed to understand it
22 but I mean it just came down to, we lost by one or two votes,
23 however you look at it.

24 MR. O'CONNELL: So I think, you know, the concerns
25 that Ed brings up in regard to impacts to the charter boat

1 industry are some of the reasons why we have a couple of
2 different option. I think it is important to just go back in
3 history to understand why the spring trophy fishery is on
4 different rules than the coast.

5 We did not always have a spring trophy fishery. And
6 while there was always a coastal fishery, and Maryland made a
7 successful pitch before my time -- and I am sure Ed O'Brien
8 and others were involved in this, to make the argument that we
9 should have an opportunity to catch those fish.

10 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: If I could add one thing. We
11 didn't always have one since the moratorium.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay.

13 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: We had one historically,
14 definitely.

15 MR. O'CONNELL: So when Maryland was successful, the
16 commission decided to allocate a very small quota for the
17 spring fishery. It may have been like 15,000 or 20,000
18 pounds. I don't know if I have the number correctly. So
19 whereas the coast was operating at 2 fish at 28 inches,
20 Maryland was given a very small quota for which we managed for
21 several years and struggled with because we were exceeding and
22 had to do significant cutbacks.

23 And then we were able to get away from the quota.
24 Fast forward, now we are being asked to take a 25 percent
25 reduction. We don't have the same rules. So the coastal

1 states are able to do certain things to get to the 25 percent.
2 They have more flexibility. They had two fish versus us in
3 the spring trophy, we are already at one fish.

4 We already have a very short season, so we are
5 limited primarily to look at the size. In order to get to the
6 size, we have to look at some pretty significant adjustments.

7 I think going forward, you know, what I would like
8 to do is, you know, when the population starts recovering,
9 that we should try to make an argument that the spring trophy
10 fishery, which is operating on the same fishery as the coast,
11 we should be operating under the same rules and try to then
12 level the playing field. It is difficult to do right now
13 because everybody is being asked to take a reduction.

14 MR. GRACIE: I understand it is difficult to do
15 right now. We are on the horns of a dilemma that in my
16 view -- maybe I don't know the whole picture -- in my view we
17 have put our charter boat industry at significant risk. And
18 talking about going forward in a few years doesn't necessarily
19 bring it back, bring back what we have lost.

20 So it seems to me that if one of the bases for an
21 appeal is fairness, then that is really central to your
22 argument, what it has done to this industry or what it can do
23 to this industry in Maryland. Is that something you are
24 pitching because the charter boat industry has been not just
25 an important economic engine for the bay but the charter boat

1 industry has been an important voice in conservation efforts
2 over decades.

3 I think they were the first ones to hit the creel
4 survey, the census for us and started collecting data. That
5 data put us in a stronger position in arguments in the past.
6 So we need to -- I think we need to do whatever we can to
7 protect that industry, what is left of it.

8 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: A couple other comments?

9 MR. O'BRIEN: When I went to Tom and said, Tom, we
10 have got to come up with an appeal, that is something we
11 haven't done with ASMFC before, Tom and Bill jumped right on
12 it and followed through on that. And it may not help us this
13 year. But it may have an effect on how they --- next year.

14 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I had a couple other hands,
15 Rachel and then Mack.

16 MS. DEAN: I want to go back to the basics and the
17 idea here being that we are supposed to be protecting the
18 spawning striped bass. So fundamentally, common sense
19 speaking, to be targeting a larger fish does not work for me.

20 So if we are moving the size up to, you know,
21 keeping -- and obviously that would have impacts on the
22 charter industry, but I don't understand the science that is
23 behind that conservation equivalency. If these are the fish
24 that we are trying to protect, why is it that we are pushing
25 our charter industry to be forced into this and to have to

1 harvest these fish?

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That is a perfect lead-in into
3 Tom's presentation on some of the options, I think. Mack?

4 MR. WOMMACK: I would like to find out, has any data
5 been done on in the spring in the lower bay of the Virginia,
6 the amount of time that they are coming out and meeting their
7 quota. Has their quota been moved back any for the netters,
8 because that is where your major, your big cows are being
9 snatched up at, right there.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: So, I mean, Virginia is required to
11 take the same reduction. You know, the 25 percent on the
12 larger fish and 20.5 on the summer/fall fish. I am not sure
13 that is answering your question though, Mack.

14 MR. WOMMACK: Have you really looked at the
15 timeframe because most of those guys are meeting their quotas
16 right quick. They are right there on them. And they got them
17 and they are gone.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I appreciate the clarification.
19 So, you know, we have begun to look at the comparisons on when
20 the commercial fishery is going to operate between Maryland,
21 PRFC and Virginia. And our fishery is closed from March 1st
22 through June. Virginia has a window in there that they are
23 allowed to harvest fish commercially, and so does the Potomac
24 River, which is a little smaller.

25 And I have had conversations with my counterparts in

1 | those two jurisdictions about trying to find a way to, you
2 | know, reduce that opportunity in the late winter/early spring.
3 | We haven't got there yet. I know we have talked a little bit
4 | about it too. It is just that given all the other
5 | developments, we just haven't had the time to go back and have
6 | those conversations.

7 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Dave Sikorski and then Dave
8 | Smith.

9 | MR. SIKORSKI: One thing that is hard to grasp about
10 | all this is certainly the different sizes and everything else.
11 | And ASMFC, if I'm not mistaken, looks at it as fish. And
12 | while I know we believe and I believe the science shows that
13 | some fish are a little bit more important to the spawning
14 | stock than others, that is not how this reduction works
15 | necessarily. It is looked at as fish.

16 | So it gets really complicated. I mean, we know that
17 | the cows are being netted in Virginia, and it is a problem.
18 | But we have a limited tool set to tell them what to do. It
19 | gets complicated. I think we have all seen the articles about
20 | what the other states on the coast -- New York, New Jersey --
21 | and the intent of what the board passed was to go from two
22 | fish down to one.

23 | And that is a real reduction. 2 fish at 28 to 1.
24 | Now we have this conservational equivalency situation, and it
25 | makes it more complex, and we have Jersey and New York looking

1 for two fish and three fish. It hurts all of us coastwide in
2 what we are trying to do to bring the spawning stock biomass
3 back.

4 In Maryland, like Ed talks about, people have always
5 looked at Maryland as -- they can't quite wrap their heads
6 around the fact that we fish in this nursery and we have all
7 these small striped bass we fish on throughout the summer when
8 they only have the big ones. It is almost like we are
9 stealing from them before they get up there, and it is that
10 whole dynamic of what happens at ASMFC.

11 Unfortunately every species can -- some species
12 overlap with others, and, you know, these states are here to
13 wheel and deal with each other and make things work.

14 I look forward to -- you know, the next
15 conversation, I won't jump into it yet, with regard to how
16 exactly we fish upon our large fish in the spring season
17 because, you know, I think we really have to put our heads
18 together on the best way of putting Maryland's best foot
19 forward.

20 In general, I am not in favor of an appeal. I
21 understand why there should be one. I believe it would be the
22 right -- CCA all along asked for a 25 percent reduction for
23 everybody. We understand why a 20 percent reduction was
24 handed down in the bay. And understand there are some
25 hardships that come with that.

1 But, you know, unfortunately if we want these fish
2 to come back in the quickest fashion, we should take the
3 largest reduction possible. And that has been our position
4 from the beginning and continues to be our position. But we
5 are here at the table to talk about the right way to go about
6 setting these limits for spring and even the summer.

7 MR. D. SMITH: I am just kind of going off of what
8 Dave said there. There is a right way, and what we have is
9 within ASMFC rules, and they go by fish, and that is what we
10 are going to go by.

11 So we are going to try and come to a decision on
12 what the regulations should be before the appeal because they
13 have to be in place, right, Tom? And then we will appeal and
14 see how that goes.

15 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. We are looking to get advice
16 today on how to go forward with the spring trophy rules. And
17 then, as you will see, it is pretty limited what we can do for
18 the summer/fall with the 20 inch but if we are successful with
19 the appeal, that would allow an opportunity to explore
20 something else for both the commercial and recreational from
21 the June forward.

22 MR. D. SMITH: I guess I would have to say that, you
23 know, I am kind of going back and forth on the appeal but I
24 think the important part of that is that there -- we always
25 here the statement, using the best available science. And

1 that is critical in this case.

2 I was at that meeting too, and they didn't. They
3 didn't use the best available science. And they knew that
4 they needed Chesapeake Bay reference points but for reasons I
5 think we all know, they just didn't get there. So it sounds
6 like they are working on it and possibly may have those.

7 So, you know, we will see how that appeal plays into
8 all of that.

9 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, Ed, and then after Ed let's
10 go ahead and let Tom present all the options so we can enrich
11 the discussion. Go ahead, Ed.

12 MR. O'BRIEN: Okay, well, it sounds like people
13 accept that this is really tough on charter boats out there.
14 And they hear conservation, and I respect that. When we had
15 the slaughter going on off the Virginia cape, and we asked
16 how many fish are being caught, the number came out, well,
17 about 80,000, somewhere between 80,000 and 280,000.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: It was higher than that.

19 MR. O'BRIEN: Well, who was it that got on their
20 feet? It was the Maryland Charter Boat Association, and said,
21 hey, how can this be? People are talking about conservation
22 but nobody seems to want to look at that and see it for what
23 it was.

24 Massachusetts at the time was the chairman of ASMFC.
25 And I had worn him out over the years opening up the striped

1 bass fishery when we came out of the moratorium, when New York
2 went along with us on the trophy season and said it is
3 necessary for Maryland. So he said, hey, we got to listen to
4 this, because we don't know what is going on out there.

5 Well, they really did get into it and they came up
6 with an enforcement group from every state. That was great.
7 And then they had the Coast Guard cooperating with them on
8 that. I just don't like any connotation that Maryland, and
9 particularly the charter boat industry, hasn't fought from a
10 conservation standpoint.

11 There weren't any recreational organizations that
12 seemed excited about this at the time. And I am going to
13 blend into this my last comment on this.

14 The party boats of out of New Jersey, New York, went
15 up north saying there is all kinds out of rockfish out there,
16 but they are out in the EEZ 10-15 miles out. How does that
17 work into all this when there is -- you have got a significant
18 fishery just laying out there. We are only concerned with
19 three miles out. And that is something that -- I have heard
20 enough about it to where I believe it is true.

21 I saw some photographs that came from airplanes
22 showing the huge schools of rockfish out there. I don't know
23 how this blends in but it sort of something that seems to
24 be -- I won't say ignored because a lot of people are talking
25 about it.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: All right. Go ahead, Tom.

2 MR. O'CONNELL: All right. Well, just on that note,
3 I don't think a lot of people realize the amount of time that
4 people like Ed and Bill and Dave and others who are involved
5 put forth, and I think everybody owes them, you know,
6 appreciation.

7 Ed has been very influential over the years on our
8 spring trophy and enforcement issues as well as others who
9 participate in the process, and you guys do that voluntarily.
10 So thanks for that. So, okay. So, Paul, if you can bring up
11 the other presentation.

12 And just before I begin, you know, we have been
13 discussing striped bass for almost a year. And it has been
14 among, if not the most challenging conversation that I have
15 had as director of fisheries in trying to reach consensus
16 among stakeholders. And I know coming into today's meeting,
17 there are a lot of different perspectives on this.

18 And, you know, we may end this meeting and I leave
19 here with those split perspectives. Ultimately we have to
20 make a decision but I would ask everyone to try to go into
21 this conversation with open minds.

22 I have tried to develop a list of pros and cons with
23 each option, and it would be great if we could leave here
24 today with some consensus recommendation, knowing that not
25 everybody is going to get exactly what they want. Dave?

1 MR. SIKORSKI: Just a thought, and tell me if I am
2 wrong and say no if you have to. I know at the council and
3 commission meetings, a lot of times on issues you have got a
4 big room and a lot of people who want to talk.

5 I find it nice when the chairperson who directs
6 people to speak either for or against an issue, can alternate.
7 It gives a good back and forth for everybody to kind of play
8 that logic back and forth in their heads which way is the best
9 way to go, and you alternate throughout the conversation.

10 I don't know if that would be beneficial to this
11 conversation today, for each issue or not, but I put it out
12 there as a way to maybe organize this conversation a little
13 easier.

14 MR. O'CONNELL: Any opposition for -- trying to of
15 facilitate the conversation that way?

16 (No response)

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So what are we going to do, deal
19 with these one by one?

20 MR. O'CONNELL: We are going to go through the
21 entire presentation and then we are going to come back and,
22 you know, try to deal with it, them as a whole by sector.

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay.

24 MR. O'CONNELL: So just going forward -- so again
25 just to reiterate, you know, I am really optimistic that we

1 | can roll up our sleeves and try to look at this from not only
2 | your own perspective but everybody's perspective and try to
3 | leave here today with a consensus recommendation. That would
4 | be great.

5 | Before I forget, I want to thank Lexi and
6 | Angela -- you guys raise your hands. They have done a
7 | tremendous amount of work over the past year and specifically
8 | over the last several months looking at these options, and
9 | there have been some new options that just developed over the
10 | last few days that they were able to put together some
11 | analysis to give us an opportunity to discuss them today.

12 | MR. GRACIE: If I understood you correctly, you are
13 | going to present all these before we make any comments and
14 | then come back?

15 | MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, yes.

16 | MR. GRACIE: Okay.

17 | MR. O'CONNELL: So there are three fisheries, the
18 | first one being the Atlantic and coastal bays. And then we
19 | are going to talk about the spring trophy fishery, and then
20 | end with the summer/fall bay fishery.

21 | (Slide)

22 | So the Atlantic fishery is summarized here. Looking
23 | at the same season that we have always had, looking at the
24 | same size limit, the 28 inches. The thing that we are going
25 | to have to change is reducing the creel from 2 to 1 fish per

1 person.

2 And this option was reviewed and approved by the
3 Technical Committee. It still needs to be approved by the
4 board. But we don't expect there to be a problem. And as a
5 couple people alluded to, some of these states are looking at
6 conservational equivalent options. So instead of going 1 fish
7 at 28, they are looking at a variety of other options to get
8 them to 2 fish, or just get the charter boat to 2 fish.

9 And you have a handout that summarizes what all the
10 states have put forth to kind of give you a sense of the
11 flavor of those. We are limited to looking at alternatives
12 because our coastal fishery is extremely small. We don't have
13 a lot of data to support conservational equivalent options.

14 We have been talking to members within MSSA and CCA
15 on the coast to try to get them to voluntarily do angler logs
16 so we can kind of build that database of knowledge to put us
17 in a better position to look at conservational equivalency.
18 But right now we are limited to the one fish person with the
19 season and the size being the same.

20 (Slide)

21 Going forward, the spring trophy fishery, you know,
22 I think going into the fall and into the winter, there was
23 grudging acceptance of the fact that we were going to have to
24 go to a larger size limit. But as people learned of the
25 proposals that are being submitted by the other states with

1 | these two fish options, we began to see an increasing level of
2 | frustration that we should be looking at different
3 | alternatives.

4 | So just to begin with, I think it is important to
5 | share with you our understanding of what the population of
6 | fish looks like in the spring. And this is the
7 | length/frequency distribution of fish from 2011 to 2013 in the
8 | spring trophy fishery.

9 | And you will see that there has been conversations
10 | about a minimum size of 36 inches or looking at 28 to 36
11 | inches, and people are saying, well, how can both of those be
12 | conservational equivalents?

13 | Well, as you can see, there is pretty much an equal
14 | number of fish above 36 inches and below 36 inches so that
15 | makes those conservationally equivalent, as Dave said, on an
16 | individual number of fish basis.

17 | And that is how the Technical Committee is currently
18 | reviewing these. They are looking at a 25-percent reduction
19 | in the number of fish. Whether it is 45-inch fish or a
20 | 28-inch fish, it is considered the same. We all know that is
21 | not the case. The larger fish are predominantly the females
22 | and are more fecund.

23 | The fish between 28 to 36 inches are more males, but
24 | when you start getting the 32 inches, you start getting a lot
25 | of females. So there is a mixture of males and females in the

1 fish below 36 inches. So that is just the length frequency
2 distribution. And from that length frequency distribution --
3 it is used to determine how you get a 25-percent reduction.

4 So we have got to figure out somewhere in that size
5 grouping how we can save 25 percent. Next slide.

6 (Slide)

7 So the first option, Spring Trophy Fishery Option 1,
8 was where we ended up after the majority of dialogue last
9 fall. And that was to keep the season, keep the one fish, but
10 go to a minimum size of 36 inches. So a pretty substantial
11 increase in the minimum size.

12 This came out of conversation with the Sport
13 Fisheries Advisory Commission, and Mike Luisi and I also went
14 to the Maryland Charter Boat Industry Association. And we
15 heard a lot of conversations about a couple different options
16 that you will hear about today.

17 And from that meeting, we felt like the majority of
18 stakeholders, not all, but the majority of them were wanting
19 to maintain the trophy fishery and increase the minimum size.
20 One of the concerns with going to a 28 to 36 inch option,
21 which was discussed, was that you eliminate the trophy feature
22 of this fishery, which has been historically important.

23 And you will see there has been some modification
24 now to that 28- to 36-inch option. Some of the pros: It
25 maintain a traditional trophy fishery. When the trophy

1 fishery first opened after the moratorium, it was 36 inches.
2 And it is consistent with what Virginia and the Potomac River
3 Fisheries Commission's rules are right now for the spring.

4 Some of the disadvantages: It focuses more harvest
5 on the larger, female spawning stock. But you need to keep
6 that in perspective that this fishery is just a small fraction
7 of the total migrant harvest along the Atlantic coast.

8 You saw a little bit before in the preseason
9 catch-and-release fishery what --- to that fishery was for the
10 entire coast. Our spring trophy fishery, I believe, is less
11 than 5 percent of all the fish harvested along the coast. So
12 while there is a perception, and some reality, to the fact
13 that there is a focus on larger fish, you know, the impact to
14 the entire stock is not as significant as some people may
15 believe.

16 There is also some concern that there would be
17 increased difficulty to catch a legal fish now that the size
18 limit has been substantially increased. And that leads us to
19 the next option -- Paul, if you can advance it.

20 (Slide)

21 This is identical to the last option with one
22 exception. And Phil Langley, he gets a lot of credit for
23 brainstorming, trying to come up with solutions. He said, is
24 there any way to allow a boat to have one fish between 28 and
25 36 inches?

1 So then you are out there on a day where you are
2 having a difficult time putting a fish in the boat, you know,
3 can you at least have the opportunity to bring a fish home
4 between 28 and 36 inches for the boat? And we looked at this,
5 whether this idea could be applied for both the private and
6 the charter boat. And when we did that, we learned that the
7 private sector is too big to allow that.

8 So when we looked at it from the charter boat
9 perspective, and because the charter boat harvest is a much
10 smaller fraction of the total harvest, we learned that we
11 could still achieve a 25-percent reduction if we allow this
12 just for the charter boat. So how this would work: So if you
13 had six people on your charter boat, it is not an extra fish.
14 But five people could have one fish above 36 inches and one
15 person could have a 28- to 36-inch fish in lieu of that bigger
16 fish.

17 So, you know, one person is allowed to have that
18 smaller fish. Some of the pros, again, they are pretty
19 similar to the last option with the exception that the charter
20 boats, given the economic impact that people have acknowledged
21 already today, it is giving them an opportunity to better
22 ensure at least bringing home one fish when it is difficult to
23 catch the bigger ones.

24 Some of the disadvantages: Similar to the last one,
25 you can read them for yourself. The one additional thing is

1 | it starts to separate private and the charter boats, and while
2 | we can still demonstrate that we meet the reduction, you know,
3 | there are those people who, you know, will argue, and they
4 | already have with this option, is why can the charter boat
5 | guys be allowed to do this and the private boats not?

6 | You know, it is out there, and I think there is a
7 | reasonable argument against that, given that the charter boat
8 | is a commercial business, and there is significant economic
9 | impact that we are trying to mitigate.

10 | So that is option 2. And those are the two options
11 | that we presented to the Technical Committee, and both of them
12 | were approved because they met the 25-percent reduction.

13 | So now let's go to two options that have developed
14 | just in the last few days.

15 | (Slide)

16 | This first option stems from conversations with the
17 | Maryland Charter Boat Association with Ed, was is there any
18 | way, now that we are seeing what these other coastal states
19 | are doing, is there any way to give us a second fish? We are
20 | losing business because of the marketing disadvantages, both
21 | from a two-fish perspective and having a larger fish.

22 | So our staff looked at the possibility, knowing
23 | that, you know, a 36-inch fish gave us a little bit more than
24 | a 25-percent reduction. We couldn't get anything less but we
25 | had a little cushion there.

1 You know, could we look at what we could add as a
2 second fish but stay within the 25-percent reduction? So the
3 option they came up with was you could have one fish between
4 36 and 40 inches, and you could have a second fish greater
5 than 40 inches.

6 And I know, Ed, yesterday I gave you a different
7 number but we have been refining the analysis, and that number
8 is 40 inches. So you could have 2 fish, one between 36 and
9 40, and one greater than 40 inches. And so you start looking
10 at the pros and cons with this. Again, you are providing that
11 opportunity to catch a trophy fish. It mitigates the 2-fish
12 marketing disadvantages with other coastal states.

13 Some of the disadvantages: You are focusing the
14 harvest on those larger females. Again, you have got to keep
15 that in perspective from what I already stated. There is
16 inconsistency with Virginia and the Potomac River; however, if
17 they learn we are going forward with this option, they may
18 also consider it themselves.

19 (Slide)

20 So one more option for the spring trophy fishery.
21 This is the option that was presented in the Solomons Charter
22 Boat Association letter that you guys received in your packet.
23 And talking to Bill and Dave, they thought it would be
24 beneficial to review this with the commission. It builds off
25 of the idea of the lower bay's 28- to 36-inch option but was

1 modified, recognizing people's desire to still have the
2 opportunity to catch a trophy fish.

3 So we are looking at having a two-fish creel limit.
4 One fish would be 28 to 36 inches, so that area in blue.
5 There would be a no-take slot between 36 and 42. That way we
6 get our 25-percent reduction. And then you could have a
7 second fish above 42.

8 So some of the pros and cons to this option are
9 again because you still have that opportunity for a big fish,
10 you are able to, you know, still have the opportunity to bring
11 home a trophy fish. It not only mitigates the two-fish
12 marketing disadvantages but also levels the playing field with
13 the size as well.

14 And it adds further protection to the female
15 spawning stock, especially the larger females. Some of the
16 disadvantages are that while it does still provide an
17 opportunity to catch a trophy fish, it is less common because
18 those 42-plus inch fish are rare.

19 You are also going to have some customers who may
20 catch a fish of a lifetime, 38, 39 inches, and they are going
21 to be asked to release it. There are some potential impacts
22 to tournaments, and Dave and I had a brief conversation
23 yesterday just to let him know that this idea was being
24 presented.

25 We looked at the spring tournaments for the last two

1 | years, and what the data show is that typically the winners of
2 | those tournaments have fish above that 42 inches. Well, it
3 | was one, I guess, that had 41 inches.

4 | So most tournament winners would still be able to
5 | bring in a fish that wins those tournaments, but Dave and I
6 | talked about it, and he can emphasize more, is that a lot of
7 | people feel rewarded with bringing a fish to the scales. And
8 | while they would still be able to do that for a fish 20 to 36
9 | inches, they are not going to be able to do that for that
10 | no-take slot.

11 | And so that is something to take into consideration
12 | as well.

13 | (Slide)

14 | And the next slide, I think it is the -- that is
15 | just a blown-up picture of that graph. You can go forward.

16 | (Slide)

17 | So the summer and fall -- there is this one slide
18 | here, and then we can go through them one by one. The
19 | summer/fall, both of these options were reviewed and approved
20 | by the Technical Committee. In these conversations, we heard
21 | season is very important. People want to have the opportunity
22 | to go fishing.

23 | So we kept the season the same, and we have one
24 | option that extends the season a little bit. The opportunity
25 | for two fish is important. So we are left with looking at

1 minimum size limits, and in order to achieve the 20.5-percent
2 reduction, we have to go to 20 inches.

3 It maintains the season and creel and it is the
4 lowest minimum size that we can go with. Some of the
5 disadvantages are that we are going to experience high
6 discards of undersized fish because about half of those 2011
7 year class are going to be less than 20 inches this year.

8 Discards will be less going forward beginning next
9 year. Because the 20-inch size limit gives a little bit more
10 than that 20.5-percent reduction, we had some request to look
11 at the opportunity to extend the season through the end of the
12 calendar year. We weren't able to justify all of that, but we
13 could add five days on and allow that season to go to December
14 20th.

15 It is not a lot but if the weather is good, it is
16 going to provide some opportunity to go fishing for almost
17 another week.

18 So my suggestion would be that we go back to the
19 beginning, the Atlantic coastal fishery. I am thinking that
20 one is pretty straightforward. And we can see if there are
21 any alternative ideas and then move into the spring trophy and
22 then into the summer/fall.

23 ***Questions and Answers***

24 MR. GRACIE: Can I ask a question first? On the two
25 options for the trophy season that have not been reviewed by

1 the Technical Committee, are you convinced they meet the
2 reduction?

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

4 MR. GRACIE: So they should be approved by the
5 Technical Committee.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. So we used the same
7 methodology for the other two options -- and that is a good
8 question. So if we decide to go forward with a different
9 option, it may not be possible to get the Technical Committee
10 to review it prior to the board meeting. But we can put forth
11 this idea to the board and say that we used the same
12 methodology, and would the board approve it pending Technical
13 Committee review and approval after the meeting.

14 And as long as the Technical Committee approves it,
15 then we can go forward.

16 MR. GRACIE: So what would that do with the timing
17 of this season?

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Fortunately we can adjust the rules
19 for the spring trophy fishery by public notice. So we
20 have --

21 MR. GRACIE: We have enough time to --

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: On the issues or on format or
24 what?

25 MR. SIKORSKI: Format.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay.

2 MR. SIKORSKI: I think I might have confused things
3 too much in my whole pro/con thing. That is typically done on
4 a motion, which we are not addressing at this point so let's
5 go back to the way we always do things.

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Well, thank you for that. That
7 is an important way to do it when you have a really divided
8 group, go back and forth. And if we get to a motion and we
9 have that, we can do that.

10 And I do want to tell the audience too that we will
11 have -- provide an opportunity for public comment if we have a
12 motion, on that motion. Or if any commissioner wants to
13 solicit a particular piece of information from a member of the
14 audience.

15 MR. O'CONNELL: And just two other things I should
16 mention. One is the Solomons Charter Boat Association, one of
17 their ideas was to only have one of those big fish per boat
18 rather than per individual. We looked at it from a per
19 individual basis.

20 Secondly is the letter also talked about for the
21 summer/fall fishery, you know, could we look at a seasonal
22 closure to get to an 18-inch size limit. And Alexi and Angela
23 worked on this yesterday and last night, and in order to get
24 to an 18-inch size limit for the summer/fall, you pretty much
25 have to look at a two-month closure.

1 And you can't do it November and December. You have
2 to either close May 16th through June 30th, all of July and
3 August or all of September and October. And, you know, from
4 what I have heard to date, the importance of the season, I
5 don't think people would be supportive of looking at that
6 level of a seasonal closure. I just wanted to share that with
7 you so you know.

8 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I think the Solomons proposal
9 thought it might be a two- to three-week closure. And maybe
10 that could be acceptable. But two months --

11 MR. O'BRIEN: How about 19 inches?

12 MR. O'CONNELL: 19 inches is probably about a month
13 and a half. Yes, somewhere around a month and a half,
14 approaching a month and a half. Remember, a lot of those 2011
15 fish are, you know, a little higher so you don't get a whole
16 lot of savings.

17 MR. O'BRIEN: I know discards is a two-edged sword
18 when it comes to this consideration but, my God, the charter
19 boats, they are going to be fishing until dark. They are
20 going to be putting in a lot more effort because they have got
21 a party on board that has been throwing back fish all day
22 long. Maybe they have caught a few they can keep.

23 But many times during the summer, everything you
24 catch is below 20 inches. Just about everything. So catching
25 and release, catching and release, compounding, compounding --

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So Tom was just clarifying
2 proposals that they looked at. We will come back to the
3 summer/fall fishery but we are starting off with the coastal
4 fishery. Does anybody have any comments? Any commissioners
5 have any comments on this proposal? Pretty straightforward.

6 (No response)

7 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, good. That was easy.
8 Okay, spring fishery.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: I mean, I guess it is up to you guys
10 how you want to go forward. I mean, you know, as much as I
11 would like to get, you know, a motion and some consensus, it
12 is also very important to understand the pros and cons. You
13 know, so as you look at these options, do you see anything
14 significant in regard to a pro and a con that we missed when
15 we looked at these?

16 So we have got four options, two of them built off
17 of the minimum 36. Well, three of them build off of the
18 minimum of 36. And then you have got one with the 28 to 36,
19 with one big fish.

20 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, I have got Dave first and
21 then I got Mark. Go ahead, Dave.

22 MR. D. SMITH: Yes. I was just going to go through
23 these. I will give you my opinion on each one. MSSA, we all
24 have been hearing about these reductions for a long time now
25 so we have had an opportunity to go out and talk to a lot of

1 people.

2 You know, the 36-inch minimum was something that we
3 thought of or supported to begin with. We have had that
4 minimum in our tournaments for a long time now.

5 Just to echo what Tom said, again that one of the
6 cons there is it focuses on harvest female spawning stock but
7 if you remember those charts that they showed before those
8 ASMFC meetings was that small percentage of fish that were
9 actually the female spawning stock that Maryland gets an
10 opportunity to fish on, like all the other states get to fish
11 on all year long.

12 It is just such a small percentage. And Maryland
13 has been doing far, far for a long time, and then some, more
14 than any other state on the Atlantic coast as far as
15 conservation of these fish for -- before I got here. I
16 haven't been doing this a long time but Maryland has always
17 stepped up and it has gone above and beyond. And I think I
18 don't look at that so much as a con myself. I understand the
19 science behind it and all that.

20 But I just would support this as -- just like we
21 have before.

22 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thanks, Dave.

23 MR. DEHOFF: Back to when I was very young, back
24 when the moratorium went into effect and everything, it always
25 kind of -- I had a bad feeling about the trophy fishery just

1 for what it is and when it is and what we are fishing on.

2 But as I have grown and as things have changed and
3 moved into new positions, you see the economic value of this,
4 and I see the economic value of this and the need for it to be
5 maintained.

6 I don't have any experience in that area, and one
7 thing that I am curious in, and I would like to kind of ask
8 the charter captains here at the table and possibly even their
9 guests: What do you feel is more important to your clientele
10 in the spring?

11 Do they want a two-fish limit or are they looking
12 for that fish of a lifetime? Because depending on what they
13 are looking for and what we feel is going to be most
14 marketable to maintain our bookings and things like that
15 through the seasons, we kind of need to point in that
16 direction so that it helps those charter guys out.

17 Can some of the charter captains here on the
18 commission give me an idea of what your --

19 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Phil?

20 MR. LANGLEY: And you are not going to like my
21 answer. But it is -- you run into both sides. You have got
22 about 50 percent of your clients who come there to target that
23 trophy fish. They want to catch a fish. And then the other
24 50 percent come out to fish because they want a fish to take
25 home to their families. And for the experience of it.

1 And, you know, I wish all of my clients were like
2 that. I would be okay if all of my clients were catch and
3 release if they were happy and they paid us. But as far as my
4 experience, it is, in that spring trophy season, you get
5 clients -- I have had clients --- that target trophy fish.

6 And then they will decide, well, wait, man. We have
7 done that. We would rather come back and use light tackle and
8 we can do catch and release. And they will actually put a
9 number -- for me personally. I am speaking personally for
10 myself. That is difficult.

11 But if I have got an opportunity, and I can tell you
12 I am extremely encouraged to see more options that I
13 originally thought we had to go with.

14 I would like to throw one more option out. If at
15 all possible -- and I don't know what it is going to look like
16 or not, and it may not be in reach -- but has anybody looked
17 at the option we are looking at, say, 28 to 36, or we are
18 looking at 36 and over, have we addressed the option, what if,
19 like in our summer fishery, we have one fish below 28 inches
20 and one fish above 28?

21 Is there an option or has anybody looked at the
22 possibility to where 50 percent of your catch could be between
23 28 and 36, and the other 50 percent -- so you could either
24 have, if you have four people in the boat, two fish could be
25 between 28 and 36 and the other two could be over 36.

1 MR. DEHOFF: That is similar to No. 4.

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Where you got 28 to 36 and then
3 one over 42?

4 MR. LANGLEY: That way you have a possibility of
5 everybody possibly taking home a filet and maybe not a fish
6 but I am not sure --

7 MR. GRACIE: I am guessing if you get more than one
8 fish above 36 you are going to not have your reduction.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: I am not sure if I understood your
10 options. So it is two fish, so a two-fish option?

11 MR. LANGLEY: It is still one fish per person. But
12 okay if you had six people on a boat, you could have three
13 fish in a lower slot and you could have three fish in the
14 upper slot. Still your creel limit is still one fish per
15 fish.

16 MR. O'CONNELL: So you just kind of divide it by
17 boat?

18 MR. LANGLEY: It would be divided by boat or by the
19 number of passengers on the boat. The tournament guys it
20 wouldn't affect. The charter boats it would kind of, it would
21 give you the option versus -- well, just one fish one way or
22 the other in the lower or upper slot. It would kind of be
23 split.

24 And you -- looking at the numbers, as far as your
25 graph, it looks like there is a lot of fish. It is kind of

1 even.

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: You guys would have to do some
3 calculations. Probably on what percent reduction you get,
4 right? I think one rule of thumb is the easier it would be to
5 catch your limit under whatever the rules are, the more
6 liberal it is, the less cutback credit you will get. You know
7 what I mean? That is maybe one way of thinking about it.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: If you could just back up, Paul, one
9 slide.

10 (Slide)

11 I think this option kind of gets to a lot of your
12 points. Well, not really. It requires the really big fish.

13 MR. GRACIE: I am not sure I understand one aspect
14 of that. If you apply that, if I am going out, and you have
15 that rule for everybody, then I can take any fish from 28
16 inches up. If 20 people go out in a boat singly, they can all
17 take a fish from 28 inches up. So unless you have an even
18 number of people catching the different size fish, you don't
19 maintain any ratio.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, it is like half the boat can
21 have fish between 28 to 36 and the other half can be 36 and
22 above. And shore anglers, what do they have?

23 MR. GRACIE: You have got to have an even number of
24 people on the boat.

25 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. I don't know if you guy have

1 anything to add at this point. Maybe we can think about it.

2 I think it is complicated. Not to say --

3 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I don't think you will get as
4 much cutback, just my gut feeling. But let's go back -- thank
5 you for that, Phil. Let's take that under advisement. To
6 Mark's question about creel limit versus trophy fish, which is
7 most important in charter boats. Ed, you didn't have a chance
8 to comment on that yet. I assume you wanted to.

9 MR. O'BRIEN: One option I would like you to repeat,
10 Tom, is the one -- I think you said 36 inches, where you said
11 we would have a chance to keep two.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: This one here. So you get 2 fish,
13 one between 36 and 40, and a second fish above 40. That
14 option?

15 MR. GRACIE: You think that would be more attractive
16 to your clients?

17 MR. O'BRIEN: It is something we have got to do some
18 more thinking about. We are going to have a meeting of
19 officers tonight. We have got to find a way to see what the
20 consensus would be from people. We are not ready tonight. I
21 don't think this decision is going to be made until next
22 Thursday. It will probably be made in the last hour when it
23 comes to ASMFC.

24 I would like to open this up -- can we open this up
25 now to other charter boat captains who are here?

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: How about if we get all the hands
2 around the table first and then let's do that. It sounds
3 worthwhile. All right, Dave first and then Phil.

4 MR. SIKORSKI: Do you want us to speak on any of the
5 options at this point?

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Well, it looks like that is the
7 way it is going.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Keep it to the spring trophy right
9 now.

10 MR. SIKORSKI: So in general I understand how moving
11 from 28 inches to 36 inches reduces our catch but I think we
12 are moving in the wrong direction when it comes to increasing
13 the impact on the large fish.

14 There are plenty of studies that show large fish are
15 important to the spawn. The preseason catch-and-release slide
16 shows that 84 percent of the harvest is females. We know the
17 upper end -- Paul, can you pull up this chart?

18 (Slide)

19 The upper end of that distribution, the upper end of
20 that, you get a higher prevalence of females. So if we as
21 Marylanders are sitting here saying, all right, in our
22 summer/fall fishery, we only harvest male stock, then we
23 should focus on harvesting males in our spring fishery too
24 because it makes it more defensible.

25 People can take home fish. We are getting away from

1 | killing large, fecund females. And I think that is the spirit
2 | of this reduction. Now other states may not be doing it. And
3 | it may put charter boats at a marketing disadvantage but
4 | frankly I don't think this fishery should only be managed
5 | based on marketing perspective of charters. That is not what
6 | we are here to do.

7 | We are here to manage fish. And the chips fall
8 | where they may. I think a lot of other things -- there are a
9 | lot of other, it is not the role of fisheries managers to, I
10 | mean you should take it into account and I respect the
11 | industry. But we should be focusing on harvesting the fish
12 | that allows us to have a sustainable fishery.

13 | I have seen recent evidence in some studies from
14 | Secor Labs -- I haven't dug through them completely but I
15 | think I am getting it right -- that, you know, we heard during
16 | this whole reduction conversation that the spawning stock
17 | biomass is still at a level that managers are confident that
18 | they can return and see some get some good spawns to a higher
19 | level, to an acceptable level.

20 | It was also during a period after the moratorium.
21 | It allowed age classes to advance through the fishery. I
22 | would like to see the data if you have it on where the age
23 | structure was then versus now and the differences so we are
24 | comparing apples and apples.

25 | And, yes, it is all striped bass but so much has

1 | changed in those years. And I don't believe, based on
2 | anecdotal evidence, the people I have talked to and the people
3 | who fish, me included, are catching as many large fish when
4 | they should be out here, as we have, as we did back then when
5 | the trophy season was first put in after the moratorium.

6 | So I just don't believe that we have -- we need
7 | large fish, according to the spawning success, we don't have
8 | as many as we had then. From what I have seen, and from what
9 | I am seeing on the water and hearing on the waters, therefore
10 | we shouldn't focus -- just because it works on paper, we
11 | shouldn't slide the ruler up and say, all right, go after
12 | bigger fish.

13 | We have a commercial fishery out there that can't
14 | catch over a 36-inch fish, for good reason. There are health
15 | advisories. They are the important fish. They are our cows.
16 | So while, you know, in thinking about the charter
17 | industry -- and private anglers.

18 | I was in All Tackle the other day talking to Keith
19 | Frazier, he said he has heard of guys that if it slides up to
20 | 36 inches, they are going to sell all their tackle and not
21 | even fish because they know their fishing strengths over the
22 | last couple years, they are not catching big fish.

23 | They are not going to go out there and burn the
24 | fuel, spend money on tackle, do everything else -- I mean,
25 | Keith flat-out said, I am going to have to diversify my

1 business more than ever because he waits for the spring to get
2 them going, to sell the tackle.

3 And with a 36-inch minimum, most of the guys he
4 knows, who fish a lot, aren't going to come in and buy the
5 rods, buy the reels, restring everything, do all the stuff
6 that is the economic driver that exists with the private
7 anglers and the charter industry.

8 So you are forcing a 36-inch fish -- I mean, I am
9 repeating things I heard. So I wrote right here on the
10 Solomons letter: yes, maybe and no to the options.

11 The first option, one fish per person, one striped
12 bass per person of 28 to 36. One slot fish, of which one per
13 boat may be over 44 inches. The reason I say yes is because
14 28 to 36, you are more likely to catch males as opposed to
15 over 36 you are catching mostly females.

16 It allows people to take home -- they can take home
17 one per person like it has always been. They are not seeing a
18 major difference in the trophy season as they have experienced
19 this, charter clients or private anglers or anybody. They are
20 not seeing a major shift. Yes, they are seeing a size change,
21 there are some guardrails but, hey, we all have got to do what
22 is right for conservation. So they take home their meat.

23 Now their letter said one fish over 44 inches. We
24 know from the data, through the numbers you guys have
25 crunched, we are talking about one fish at 42 inches now.

1 As far as I am concerned, from a CCA perspective,
2 no. In the spirit of understanding, you know, the economic
3 impact for both private fishermen and charter boats, I
4 understand that we can only phase in the changes. And this is
5 a trophy fishery. We have called it a trophy fishery. It
6 allows Maryland to stay on a level playing field, where you
7 can come here and catch these large trophy fish.

8 So, you know, that is the olive branch here from
9 CCA. And, you know, in general we don't want to kill these
10 big fish but I understand that we can allow there to be some
11 harvest of trophy fish especially because there is not a lot
12 of them.

13 Now it is like having your cake and eating it too.
14 I know we need them but yes, for the benefit of the industry
15 and the economic benefit, I understand why these fish are
16 harvested. And that is the person can choose whether they
17 keep a slot fish or they keep their big fish.

18 If that person has killed their slot fish already,
19 then they are done. It is one fish. Two fish is unacceptable
20 and should not be done. It is the exact thing. So it is the
21 whole argument of, you know, your friend jumps off a cliff,
22 should you do it too? No. Just because New York and New
23 Jersey are doing it doesn't mean Maryland should do it.

24 The same thing happened with Menhaden. For good
25 reason, I understand why Maryland's managers added a by-catch

1 allowance for Menhaden, but then every other state started
2 doing it. You know, what we are looking to do is conserve
3 fish. We can be the leaders in this and still not hurt
4 ourselves.

5 And so the two-fish limit for Maryland is just a
6 step in the wrong direction. The original intent of this
7 movement was to go from two fish to one on the spawning stock
8 biomass. We are talking about per fish, kill one. One is
9 enough. Everybody has seen the --- . Everybody has seen the
10 consumption advisories. And everybody knows that these fish
11 are the fish we need to bring us back.

12 So if want to have a strong summer/fall fishery, we
13 need a good spawn. And nobody seems to know why we haven't
14 had a good spawn recently except for 2011. Good conditions
15 last year -- we don't know why we didn't have it. Is it
16 because most of the spawners are smaller and we need larger
17 ones? I mean, I don't know.

18 So again No. 3 from the Solomons guys, two fish per
19 person, I could never support that. And the reason I said
20 maybe -- oh, the No. 1 was one trophy fish per boat, not per
21 angler. I think that is the most reasonable.

22 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That was your yes, right?

23 MR. SIKORSKI: That is my yes.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Yes, maybe, no is the order.

25 MR. SIKORSKI: Correct, is the order.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay.

2 MR. SIKORSKI: You know, fishing in my eyes, when it
3 comes to fishing on species that we have some concern about
4 and we are trying to, you know, make them more sustainable so
5 we have less, you know, peaks and valleys in our fishery --
6 five years ago, maybe six years ago, CCA National had a
7 position at ASMFC that said, we see a downward trend in our
8 spawning stock biomass.

9 We should incrementally take reductions along the
10 way so we are not sitting in a room like we are today. And
11 okay, I told you so, but that doesn't get us anywhere. But
12 that is the mentality where I come from, and fishing, we need
13 to promote in Maryland fishing for the experience, not just
14 fishing to kill our larger striped bass.

15 And we can be leaders in that arena and continue to
16 have good businesses and, you know, it comes down to all of
17 us, whether we be charter boat captains or people introducing
18 people to fishing or private anglers. I see it already.
19 People are releasing these large fish because they know they
20 are important, they know things are on the downturn, and they
21 are doing it on their own without any push.

22 If we as managers push the regulations toward that,
23 we are going to be doing ourselves a service for the future, a
24 beneficial service. That is all.

25 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Dave. You had a

1 comment on Dave. Then I have got Phil and I am going to come
2 back to Ed for soliciting other input.

3 MR. O'CONNELL: I appreciate all that, Dave. I just
4 want to clarify, so what you would support, put on the table
5 as an option, is one fish, right, just one fish. It could
6 either be 28 to 36 or above 42 per person?

7 MR. GRACIE: No, he said one big one could be --

8 MR. SIKORSKI: Per boat.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: One big one per boat?

10 MR. SIKORSKI: Yes, one big one per boat I think --
11 I understand how that would be, that could work. You know,
12 this isn't something you work through -- I could work through
13 all these issues with everybody at CCA. But I am talking
14 about our general mindset in trying to protect the bigger
15 fish. I think that, given the options we have, makes the most
16 sense.

17 So the boat, so we could have that one trophy fish.
18 I feel for me, and some of these boat charter trips will
19 continue.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: And that is an extra fish in
21 addition --

22 MR. SIKORSKI: No.

23 MR. O'CONNELL: I am just saying, so --

24 MR. SIKORSKI: One fish creel, one fish per person.
25 Out of all those fish on the boat, one per person.

1 MR. O'CONNELL: I appreciate the clarification on
2 that.

3 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That is the first of the Solomons
4 proposals. Okay, Phil.

5 MR. LANGLEY: Yes, and I probably, I am just going
6 to be a second, but I am just going to go back and echo what
7 Captain Ed was saying. With something of this magnitude, I am
8 not prepared to say one way or the other.

9 We have got a lot of constituents out there who --
10 there are a couple options here that weren't here before. And
11 we need to be able to go back to our people and give them an
12 option to see all of the options presented at this time.

13 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I appreciate that. That will
14 have to be quick though, I think.

15 MR. LANGLEY: I understand that time is of the
16 essence but we would like to give them an opportunity to
17 comment.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, then. Before I go back
19 to -- if you don't mind, Ed. You had a quick something,
20 Rachel?

21 MS. DEAN: Yes. I just have a concern. If there
22 isn't a motion made tonight, will we reconvene because I think
23 that people would like to know on the record how this decision
24 was made and how this group came to it instead of us running
25 back to the groups and then meeting with you individually and

1 | there not being that transparency.

2 | So is that an option here or do we need to come to a
3 | consensus?

4 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Well, we haven't decided yet. We
5 | don't know where we are going to end up. We know that Phil
6 | would prefer to be able to go back and talk it over some more,
7 | yes, but we are not done as a group yet.

8 | MR. O'CONNELL: And I would just offer --

9 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: But that is a good point.

10 | MR. O'CONNELL: And I appreciate the need to go back
11 | and -- there is always that opportunity, as Bill said, the
12 | meeting is next Wednesday, I think it is. You know, we have
13 | all been talking about this issue for a year, and I would
14 | think that all of you have a very good understanding of what
15 | each of your constituents value.

16 | And, you know, I really think today it is looking
17 | at, you know, do we understand all the pros and cons with the
18 | different options? I mean, I still say that I think it comes
19 | down to you have constituents who are split. Some value
20 | having the opportunity for big fish; some, small.

21 | Is that going to change by going back out to your
22 | constituents? I mean, it hasn't to date. Maybe there is an
23 | option that they would say, yes, that is it. It is not
24 | likely. So again there is time to have you guys leave here
25 | today and discuss these other options with your constituents

1 but I would like to, you know, at least -- let's, when we
2 leave here today, let's all have a good understanding of each
3 other's perspectives.

4 And maybe we can narrow it down to a couple. So
5 when you go back out there, it is a little bit easier. It is
6 not four options, it is a couple options.

7 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, Val.

8 MR. LYNCH: This is more of a technical question.
9 Let me see if I can frame it right. If we look at one and
10 two, they are essentially the same. Which of three and four
11 approximate the impact or minimizes the impact of the fishery?

12 In other words, which two-fish option is the closest
13 to the one fish option? Can you look and see --

14 MR. O'CONNELL: You mean the stock?

15 MR. LYNCH: The stock.

16 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, so, again from the Technical
17 Committee's standpoint, they are looking at it from the
18 numbers of fish. But the option that provides further
19 protection to the larger females is going to have a greater
20 conservation benefit to the stock. So option 4 would have a
21 greater conservation benefit to the stock when you compare
22 them side by side.

23 MR. LYNCH: You have got one and two, four and three
24 in terms of impact on stock.

25 MR. O'CONNELL: One, two and three are fairly

1 comparable because they are all achieving about a 25 percent
2 reduction. Whether you have one fish or two fish under
3 options one, two and three, the focus is on the larger fish
4 and the impact is about the same.

5 Option four provides greater protection to the
6 larger females. We have to keep in mind that from a coastal
7 perspective, that magnitude of difference between those
8 options is not significant. But if you look at them side by
9 side, the option four that provides greater protection to the
10 larger females is more conservative on a side-by-side
11 comparison.

12 Will you see it from a coastal stock perspective?
13 It may not be enough of a difference.

14 MR. GRACIE: I am not following that. I am very
15 confused now. Option four has two fish per day, one of them
16 greater than 42; the other, 28 to 36. In other words,
17 everybody on the boat could take a 42-inch fish home with
18 that. Why does that provide greater protection to the large
19 fish than one fish over 42 for the boat?

20 MR. SIKORSKI: I think the issue is option four
21 reflects one of the options of the Solomons charter letter.
22 Not the option that I have spoken in favor of. So let's call
23 that option five. One fish, not two.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That is first Solomons one that
25 they have not --

1 MR. SIKORSKI: That is the yes.

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: -- put up here because it was
3 much more conservative than necessary, I think. Is that the
4 reason, Tom?

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I think that is what it was. Ed,
7 I am trying to clear up all the hands around the table before
8 going outside of the table.

9 MR. O'BRIEN: When we talk about recreational
10 fishermen, certainly recreational fishermen as represented by
11 Dave, and recreational fishermen as represented by CCA is
12 quite a different lot. Let's talk about the people whom we
13 take out on the charter boats, our customers. It is a
14 significant portion of the recreational fishery.

15 And typically our customers want the chance to catch
16 a big fish, particularly in the spring. And that is what that
17 dream about. Now is that fish a 36-inch or is it a 42-inch?
18 Is it a 38-inch fish? These people, our customers, a lot of
19 them come from church groups, veterans groups. They charter
20 sometimes 8 or 10 boats on their trips, 2,3,4, 10 boats.

21 Now that is pretty significant economic value to
22 this state. They stay in hotels. They go to restaurants. So
23 the socioeconomic, the economic part of it, certainly to me,
24 would tend for us to lean toward some liberalization. Now Tom
25 would you repeat again how much of our fishery is typically

1 part of the coastal stock, our spring fishery?

2 MR. O'CONNELL: It is less than 5 percent.

3 MR. O'BRIEN: Less than 5 percent. Less than 5
4 percent. Think about that. How are we really going to be
5 beating these fish up compared to the overall spawning
6 biomass? It is just not clear to me why some people from a
7 conservation, honest conservation standpoint, are still hard
8 over on this, Dave, and we have talked about your type of
9 fishermen versus his type of fishermen, versus who we take out
10 there.

11 And I just think on this trophy fish, we are getting
12 hit hard, and I don't see that changing that much when it
13 comes to all summer long. I just think this should be an area
14 to be liberal. Less than 5 percent of the coastal fishery we
15 are talking about.

16 Also something -- Tom, also something here to me is
17 the key for misunderstanding. I see fish 27, 28 inches, 30
18 inches in that time period and they are caught full of roe.
19 Full of roe. So that is something to consider, how many of
20 those fish in that slot have roe in them. And the thing that
21 is not clear to me, which might help us in our thinking, is
22 there appears to be real confusion as to how many of these
23 fish in April and into May, are males.

24 Early on it doesn't seem like there is a whole lot
25 of males, and I know as it goes on, it increases. So maybe

1 that should be a factor in this also. Do you have that chart
2 by any chance?

3 MR. O'CONNELL: No, but typically the fish 28 to 32
4 are predominantly males and 32 and above are, you know, begin
5 to shift predominantly female so, you know, it is a mixture.

6 It is not -- you know, there was some premise that
7 all the fish 28 to 36 were males. That is not true. You
8 know, it is pretty much split. I think just a couple points.
9 And again, as much as you guys probably -- I have been
10 thinking about this almost 24/7 for a year and, you know, as I
11 said, the entire fishery is probably less than 5 percent of
12 the coastal harvest, right?

13 You start looking at the differences between options
14 one, two, three, four and five, you are talking probably a
15 percent to a fraction of a percent difference.

16 MR. GRACIE: In the coastal harvest.

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Of the coastwide.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: So, I mean, all these options are,
19 you know, pretty much comparable but there are some distinct
20 differences, and it really gets down to, you know, what are
21 the objectives, back to I think it was Val's point, what are
22 the objectives of this fishery?

23 You know, to your point, Dave, and the reason I --
24 we were limited on time getting the letter yesterday, but the
25 other reason we didn't spend a lot of time on the option from

1 the letter that you kind of modified is we know the charter
2 boats really want the opportunity to get the two fish. And
3 that option doesn't do it.

4 The other thing is that, you know, as we all try
5 to -- and you offered some compromises, and that is great.
6 But also, you know, there are a lot of tournaments in the
7 spring and some people don't like the tournaments but if you
8 go one big fish per boat, I imagine that would have some
9 pretty significant impacts to the tournaments.

10 So we are trying to find a way where everybody gets
11 a little bit, not everything. And I am not advocating for one
12 or the other, I am just highlighting some of the concerns with
13 those.

14 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, I have still have hands
15 around the table. I wasn't ready yet, Ed, to jump to your guys
16 but we will do that momentarily. And Dave, you have been
17 waiting a long time. You are next. I am sorry, I missed you
18 before. I let Val slip in on you. I am sorry about that.

19 MR. D. SMITH: Val brings up a good point, what are
20 the objectives? What are we trying to do here? And from my
21 point of view, having all these members and chapters, is
22 giving them an opportunity, just like all the other coastal
23 states, to access an opportunity to fish.

24 And again it always comes back -- and it has been
25 said many times, less than 5 percent. So we don't shoot

1 ourselves in the foot, let's give the charter boats, the
2 marinas and tackle shops, and everybody who benefits from this
3 trophy fishery, the opportunity to compete.

4 And like Tom just said, the difference between all
5 these is so minute. I don't know what the number is -- I
6 would use it if I did -- that let's pick one that meets those
7 objectives, those goals while still within the limits that
8 ASMFC has asked us to put or reduce, a reduction.

9 So I will say again that, you know -- well, let me
10 clarify this option four. The tournament data here, Tom, I
11 don't know, there is probably some more work that we have to
12 do on that, but that does -- while those are winners, there
13 are a lot of other people below that.

14 And I don't want to just be the tournament guy. We
15 do run tournaments and they are successful and there is a lot
16 of people in those tournaments. The spring tournaments: 500
17 boats, nearly 3,000 anglers, and they are all over the bay,
18 and they spend a lot of money on that weekend at a lot of
19 restaurants and hotels and getting fuel and bait, and that it
20 is an economic impact.

21 I think it is pretty significant. In some cases, in
22 the fall, down south, when there is not a whole lot going on
23 the tournament guys come into town and the restaurants are
24 going again, and we have some sponsors who are restaurant
25 owners, and they appreciate that.

1 I think we don't -- we want to be competitive out
2 there. We want people to come to Maryland, to buy our
3 license. The state has been trying to increase fishing
4 license sales, right? We want people to come to Maryland
5 instead of Virginia, Delaware, and on up the East Coast.

6 So when we are looking at these options, I would
7 say -- probably note option four, I don't really want to get
8 into it too much because I think there are a lot of opinions
9 out there. We are not -- I don't know.

10 It is impossible for all of us to agree but my
11 feedback to you is access and opportunity, competing with the
12 coastal states, bringing people to Maryland and continuing
13 that trophy fishery that we have had while meeting that
14 reduction that ASMFC has asked us to do.

15 MS. DEAN: Can I make a motion?

16 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Can I ask you to hold that until
17 all the hands around the table are done?

18 MS. DEAN: Yes, but can I make it before we go
19 outside of this circle?

20 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Yes, yes, that would be
21 appropriate. So I have got Tim and then Dave and we will go
22 from there.

23 MR. SMITH: So just listening to the conversation
24 around the table, it seems to me like the second option that
25 the Solomons charter guys put together is sort of the option

1 that speaks to a little bit of everybody's needs.

2 It is going to allow smaller fish for the cooler for
3 the charter guys. It is going give the opportunity for a
4 larger fish and it is going to protect the fish that we are
5 trying to protect. So I think that is a really good option to
6 be considered.

7 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So that is -- the second one was
8 one per person, 28 to 36 or one per person -- one per person,
9 28 to 36 or over 42 did it turn out to be, Tom, instead of 44
10 the way they wrote it? That is what you meant, right, Tim?

11 MS. DEAN: Would you like to make a motion?

12 MR. GRACIE: I thought we were going to wait until
13 we heard around the table.

14 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: You have got some folks standing
15 on that, Rachel, but I got Dave first. Tom, did you have a
16 comment on that?

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, and if you guys don't want me
18 to offer these comments I won't. I will stop but I am just
19 trying to facilitate thought. A couple people have put
20 forward this option of one fish. And, you know, you just need
21 to recognize that, you know, Maryland charter boat community
22 is, you know, saying that they are being disadvantaged to
23 these other states that are exploring two-fish options.

24 On the other hand, it is like, there has always been
25 that disadvantage. We were at 1 and 28, and the coastal

1 states were at 2 at 28. Now these coastal states are looking
2 to maintain two fish but also maintain a fish at 28 inches and
3 another bigger one.

4 You know, if you go slowly to the 36-inch minimum,
5 and you allow a second fish, you are still losing some
6 marketing advantage because you only have big fish. You know,
7 the Solomons, the option, I guess, four here where you allow
8 one fish between 28 to 36, and a second fish above 42, I mean,
9 you are competing with -- you are competing for size because
10 you are offering your passengers the ability to bring home a
11 fish, I guess Phil said.

12 But you are also providing them an opportunity to
13 catch a trophy fish. It does still provide an opportunity for
14 individuals to compete for tournaments but you are going to
15 have those customers in that slot, no-take slot, who are going
16 to have to release some fish.

17 So I just want to point out that those -- you know,
18 the one fish option leaves a significant issue with the
19 charter boat community from what I have heard given what other
20 states are offering. And while that has always been the case,
21 it greater amplified now because it is not only two fish but
22 it is a small fish and a big fish. And we are just looking at
23 a big fish.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: So I have got Dave.

25 MR. SIKORSKI: If you take the 36-inch in

1 Maryland -- didn't our neighboring state Virginia already
2 decide on a 28-inch fish? So we are talking about
3 disadvantage. Our southern neighbor can keep a smaller fish.

4 MR. O'CONNELL: On the coast.

5 MR. SIKORSKI: Coastal.

6 MR. GRACIE: Just like the rest of the coast.

7 MR. O'CONNELL: Not in the bay but the coast.

8 MR. SIKORSKI: We are talking about targeting big
9 fish. You want to catch big fish? You can go there and at
10 least you can keep them. You know, the later part of the
11 trophy season you catch mostly small fish. So what are the
12 charter boats going to do with -- you know, we have always
13 been a one-fish fishery, our trophy fishery.

14 There is not some great expectation of clients all
15 of sudden feeling like they are being disparaged because they
16 could drive to New Jersey and catch two fish. I am a charter
17 client. That is my mindset. It is a one-fish fishery. I
18 catch one 28, I can keep it. And what Tim said makes sense
19 from just a fisherman perspective. I can make the decision
20 whether I keep a slot fish or whether I keep a trophy.

21 So if I am a trophy hunter, I can wait it out.
22 Maybe catch and release, whatever. Pass my turn on the rod if
23 it seems to be a small one, who knows? But I have that
24 option. That is my option as an angler. Nothing is being
25 taken away from me.

1 But to -- the whole back and forth, and without
2 economic studies and everything else, it is a gut feeling.
3 And I am not trying to say that anybody in the charter
4 industry is wrong. I understand but it is just -- I don't see
5 where pushing toward that 36 inches makes sense. And again we
6 have always been a one-fish fishery in the spring so not much
7 has changed.

8 The coast has always been a two-fish fishery. We
9 have always been a one-fish fishery. Nothing has changed. Do
10 we really have to, in the spirit of reduction, have to
11 increase our take in order to keep up with Jersey? It is
12 supposed to be a reduction. So, you know --

13 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: The coast is going down to one
14 just to clarify on that.

15 MR. SIKORSKI: Not if the states get conservational
16 equivalency.

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: The state of Maryland's proposal
18 for the coast --

19 MR. SIKORSKI: I am talking about northern coastal
20 cities --

21 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay.

22 MR. SIKORSKI: -- northern states.

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I thought you meant our fishery.
24 Jim?

25 MR. GRACIE: I would like to give Ed a chance to

1 | respond to that before I say anything.

2 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Well, I also have a hand from
3 | Mack.

4 | MR. SIKORSKI: I don't mean this to be like an Ed
5 | versus Dave back and forth. I am not anti-anything. I am
6 | just trying to bring up points that I have heard. This isn't
7 | a CCA versus a Charter Boat Association thing.

8 | There is a conversation that I was behind this
9 | letter. That I am some puppet. I was told today by somebody
10 | that I am a puppet and that I am being screwed by the Solomons
11 | Charter Boat Association guys, being made to look like a fool
12 | because I am speaking on behalf of them. None of that is the
13 | case. I have met some of for the first time today; in fact,
14 | all of them. Every single one of them.

15 | This isn't some back-and-forth competition. I am
16 | speaking from the place that CCA comes from, which is fish
17 | first. Period, the end. And I have the utmost respect for
18 | the charter industry but a belief on how we should fish this
19 | fishery to protect the spawning females. That is it, and that
20 | is the last I will speak on it.

21 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Dave. Jim, could you
22 | give us your comment?

23 | MR. GRACIE: Most of you don't think of me as a
24 | saltwater fisherman or a bay fisherman. I think most of you
25 | would agree that I am very interested in conservation. I

1 | spent my adult life on that.

2 | I am trying to put this in a perspective from the
3 | way I look at things. ASMFC decided we needed to do things to
4 | increase the spawning stock. They made a decision to be very
5 | aggressive in that. Instead of spreading the recovery over a
6 | three-year period, they frontloaded it. That caused more pain
7 | than would have necessarily been caused to our charter
8 | industry, to our whole fishery -- fishery meaning the activity
9 | of fishing.

10 | It seems to me that if any of these options meet the
11 | reduction, I don't see any need for us to be even better than
12 | that when we have already been aggressive, particularly if it
13 | means hurting our charter boat industry.

14 | If we can do something that meets the reduction
15 | requirement, which is more aggressive than one -- which a lot
16 | of people thought was acceptable already with this frontloaded
17 | reduction -- if we can meet that reduction and minimize the
18 | pain to our charter industry, I can't see that anything else
19 | makes sense.

20 | Why would we just cause more pain for some ethereal
21 | idea that, oh, we might get another 10 big females out of
22 | this. This has such a little impact on spawning stock biomass
23 | in the fishery, that we are arguing over -- I mean, it is
24 | silly.

25 | We shouldn't be taking a chance on hurting an

1 already suffering charter boat industry just to be even better
2 than we are required to be. We are on a pretty good path with
3 any of these two, recovering spawning stock. So to lead the
4 way and be even better I think -- it is one thing to say, yes,
5 fish first. But by golly without the fishery we don't have
6 anybody caring about the fish.

7 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Jim. Mack?

8 MR. WOMMACK: My personal opinion, I probably would
9 like to see the two fish a day, 28 to 36, and eliminate the 44
10 and above. And the reason I say that is because when you get
11 into the big 40-inch fish like that, you are basically dealing
12 with the cows that are laying the eggs.

13 And they are going to lay the eggs and get on out of
14 here and be gone. I would like to see more between that 28
15 and 30 because here is where the next problem is: I told you
16 once before, that we bust those 38 rock open in Chincoteague,
17 we are dealing with 77 to 80 crabs in their belly.

18 Now you are going to have a problem with the crab
19 population again because you are going to have all these 28 to
20 30s in here eating up every little crab in the bay, and we
21 will be right back here arguing about what are going to do
22 about crabs.

23 So I would like to see -- that way it will give
24 everybody two fish a day and allow, to get rid of some these
25 28 to 30s out of the bay so the crab population can have a

1 better chance. That is just my personal opinion.

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank, Mack. You want to comment
3 on that?

4 MR. O'CONNELL: So two fish between 28 and 36? So
5 that won't meet the 25 percent reduction. 28 to 36 -- there
6 is one fish between 28 to 36. There is only a little bit
7 extra to play with. And that is why we could allow one really
8 big fish.

9 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Because they are so rare.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, right.

11 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, so now I would like to
12 follow up on Ed's request. Ed do you want to comment before I
13 do this?

14 MR. GRACIE: You have one more question here.

15 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Oh, I am sorry. I didn't see
16 you, Roger.

17 MR. TRAGESER: It is not a question, I just -- as it
18 is going around. I am like Jim. I am not a saltwater
19 fisherman. And I already come from -- you know, my fishing is
20 already the culture of catch and release, as it were. But I
21 am not trying to maintain a livelihood off of what I do like
22 the commercial fishermen are doing.

23 And like Jim has said, if these plans are going to
24 meet that reduction requirement then I think the option four
25 that the Solomons Charter Boat Association brought forth, they

1 are the guys who are really taking a hit on it, been taking a
2 hit on this thing, and I would be in favor of that plan.

3 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thanks, Roger.

4 MS. DEAN: Just for clarification, that is not
5 the --- .

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, so that option four is a
7 modified third bullet of their letter.

8 MS. DEAN: Yes.

9 MR. TRAGESER: Yes, I understand.

10 MR. O'CONNELL: You know, from Jim and Roger, you
11 know, there should be emphasis on the affected charter boats.
12 And one thing we are struggling with is not everybody in the
13 charter boat community feels the same way. And hopefully
14 through this dialogue there will be some maybe greater
15 consensus on that.

16 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Ed, you had a comment? And I am
17 going to go to Rachel, like I said I would, toss out a motion,
18 and then we are going to get some feedback from the charter
19 captains in the room.

20 MR. O'BRIEN: Just getting back on the economic
21 thing: You mentioned, you know, that you have got a charter
22 boat license, there is a big difference -- I have got a lot of
23 good friends who are guides. Some of them are part of our
24 association.

25 They take out two, three, four people -- probably

1 four or less. Maryland has more certified charter boats -- in
2 other words, they can take out big parties, six or more --
3 than anybody in the country. Florida did at one time, and
4 then we seemed to go back and forth with Florida.

5 So you have got a big boat and a larger group of
6 customers, it is a different factor in sometimes how we think,
7 and certainly how our customers think. That is it.

8 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: All right. Thank you, Ed.
9 Rachel?

10 **MOTION**

11 MS. DEAN: I would like to make a motion that a
12 fifth option be added and that is the proposal proposed by the
13 Solomons Charter Boat Association, which is their second on
14 the list, which -- can we go back and just copy and paste the
15 wording if we need to write out the motion?

16 One fish per person, one striped bass per person of
17 28 to 36 inches, or one striped bass per person over 44
18 inches. Anglers may keep one fish 28 to 36 inches or one fish
19 over 44 to maintain their one fish per person limit.

20 I would like to add that motion in an effort to see
21 the party lines come together. I think that the one fish to
22 two fish creel limit may cause controversy with some of the
23 conservation groups, but I think that this option that some
24 people wrote maybe on might bring us together in an effort to
25 save our spawning striped bass, which, from the commercial

1 industry, I appreciate that.

2 I can also say the Calvert County Watermen's
3 Association has opted to support this in discussions that we
4 have had --- . So I would like to cut and paste and make that
5 an option five before we go to comment on it.

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, you said 44 but the numbers
7 can work out to be 42. I think that is what you mean, right?

8 MS. DEAN: Well, maybe we could have a discussion on
9 that and maybe weigh in on that as the motion goes around the
10 room.

11 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, so Rachel's motion, so
12 everybody understands, is the second one, the Solomons Charter
13 Captain Association letter, which was one fish per person, it
14 can be either between 28 and or over 44 in their letter. I
15 think the department's calculations worked out that it can be
16 over 42, which is a little more liberal.

17 So is there a second to that motion?

18 MR. SMITH: Second.

19 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Second by Tim Smith. Discussion
20 at the table? And again we haven't gotten feedback from
21 outside the table yet on all the options, which I do want to
22 do. We are running low on time but let's have some quick
23 discussion first.

24 MR. GRACIE: I just want some clarification. That
25 last statement of yours sounded like we were voting on a

1 motion for that to be the proposed --

2 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: No, no --

3 MR. GRACIE: It is only to add it to the others.

4 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: It is added as a fifth option,
5 yes. That is what it is.

6 MR. DEHOFF: What is the difference between that
7 choice and our option No. 4?

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Option No. 4 is two fish per day.

9 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Any other discussion on the
10 motion? Dave and then Ed.

11 MR. D. SMITH: How did the -- Tom, we had a no-take
12 slot before, right?

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

14 MR. D. SMITH: How long ago was that?

15 MR. O'CONNELL: I don't know, it was probably eight
16 or nine years ago.

17 MR. GRACIE: It was more than that.

18 MR. D. SMITH: How did that work out? What was the
19 overall feeling on that, from the DNR perspective?

20 MR. O'CONNELL: It wasn't well received. It was a
21 lot of disappointment and interest not to go back to that.

22 MR. D. SMITH: So if it is 36 to 44, by this chart I
23 see, that is a lot of fish, and I am just going off of what
24 this chart here, from what I can tell, it would be interesting
25 to see how many fish -- so if I am on a charter boat and I am

1 out there and I catch a fish between 36 and 44 --

2 (Slide)

3 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: This chart.

4 MR. D. SMITH: Yes. You know, in some cases, like
5 some of these people have said, that is a fish of a lifetime
6 for somebody. Maybe it is not but I think for a lot of people
7 that is a nice size fish that they caught that they would want
8 to take. That is reason they spent all that money to go out
9 there. And that is a lot of fish that potentially they don't
10 get -- hey, man, throw that back. That is a no-take slot.

11 You know, I just -- from the no-take slot that I
12 have heard from before, that it didn't go well at all, and I
13 think that was even a smaller no-take slot. I think that was
14 two inches or something like that. This is a larger no-take
15 slot.

16 It is just I think there would be a lot of
17 disappointed people out there, out there fishing during the
18 trophy season arguably the most, probably statistically the
19 most popular time of year for people to go out there and catch
20 a fish and spend a lot of money doing that.

21 So I -- there are a lot of options out there, and I
22 would just probably continue to have conversation on trying to
23 find something else because I wouldn't support it.

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Rachel's motion?

25 MR. D. SMITH: Rachel's motion.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: I did just get the -- or Tom got
2 some consultation and shared with me that the way she made the
3 motion, is more conservative than we need to be even dropping
4 it to 42 is more conservative than what we need to be so it
5 could be a little lower than that. Not sure exactly what,
6 right?

7 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. Go back to the next slide.

8 (Slide)

9 Yes, this one here. So this option is a two-fish
10 option, which allows you to go to 42. And if we are taking
11 this no-take of 44 and allowing only one fish, you could
12 actually drop it to maybe 40. So it is more conservative than
13 need be.

14 MR. GRACIE: We are discussing the alternative, and
15 I thought the motion was only to add this as an alternative.

16 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: It was. We are just putting more
18 information out there about it. We are not sure what the
19 alternative is, is what it is. We are just narrowing it down.
20 Okay, so we have a motion on the table. We are pretty sure
21 what it is.

22 (Laughter)

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: We do know it is the Solomons
24 Charter second proposal but the minimum size of the big fish
25 option is lower. It is 40 or 41 ballpark. They have to

1 figure that out but it is lower.

2 MR. SIKORSKI: You could have a motion to say that
3 it is one fish per person, 28 to 36 inches, or one striped
4 bass at a larger size limit, which matches the required
5 reduction per ASMFC.

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That is the intent, right? And a
7 seconder? Yes, we got that. All right, so what I would like
8 to do now is go to the audience. We have a motion on the
9 table, and by practice we do give opportunity for public
10 comment anyway but we wanted to do this to get feedback
11 specifically from any charter captains here on any of the
12 options.

13 And also if you care to, anything you would like to
14 say on Mark's earlier question, which I think would be useful
15 to the commission, and that is, what is more important for
16 your clientele: the creel limit or the chance at a trophy? So
17 that is a another thing you could comment on if you chose to.
18 So could I see a show of hands of how many charter captains
19 would like to address the commission?

20 (Show of hands)

21 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Got one, two, three. Okay, that
22 is good. We can comment one at time. Come up and use the mike
23 down here. Ken, you are first.

24 ***Public Comment***

25 MR. JEFFRIES: Ken Jeffries. I know most of you

1 | guys from sitting on this board before but I am the president
2 | of the Upper Bay Charter Boat Association, and to answer
3 | Mark's question, it is a flip of the coin.

4 | Half of the people want volume; the other half want
5 | a big fish so it is really irrelevant. And again if you poll
6 | all of us we are all going to have a different answer.
7 | Everybody runs their business differently. Everybody is
8 | coming from different areas.

9 | The only thing I am asking, and the only stance
10 | Upper Bay has ever had, is Chesapeake Bay is the only fishery
11 | under that threshold. If we are not going to tell Atlantic
12 | Marine Fisheries keep it status quo and forget all this five
13 | percent of the fish, and the summer fishery, well then we need
14 | something that is reasonable compared to the other states
15 | around us.

16 | We need a competitive edge. Whatever size you guys
17 | determine, we are going to have to live with it, so fighting
18 | over an inch or two inches is miniscule to the decision. I
19 | would like you to think of what is happening around us.
20 | Maryland is in a pretty neat area here. Anybody could drop a
21 | pin in the Delmarva area, and you could probably drive equal
22 | distance to five different ports where charter boats are at
23 | and maybe three different states.

24 | So whatever they do around us does have a factor in
25 | this, and we do want to protect the big fish. I think the one

1 option with 36 to 40 and another one over 40 is ridiculous. I
2 am not trying to offend whoever came up with it but that is
3 just killing all big fish. I am not in favor of that.

4 I have problems with every one of them up there.
5 Could I live with two or three of them? Absolutely. But the
6 killing of two big fish is just -- to me it doesn't make any
7 sense. And I am sure some of these other guys might disagree
8 with me but the only task I give you is if we haven't made a
9 decision now within the year that we have all known about it,
10 it is a like a mom and a dad: You are going to have to make
11 the decision for us.

12 We can say we need more time to talk to our people
13 and still not -- we can talk all until we are blue in the
14 face. We are still not going to come to a consensus. So I
15 challenge you to make the decision for us. Make it fair
16 compared to what is happening around us so we are not going to
17 go with status quo. And that would be the stance of the Upper
18 Bay. And leave it at that. I thank you for your time.

19 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Ken. Marty?

20 MR. SIMOUNET: I think I am speaking for the --

21 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Hey, Marty, give us your name for
22 the record.

23 MR. SIMOUNET: Marty Simounet, SCCA, Solomons
24 Charter Captains. Speaking for SCCA, I believe, you know, our
25 original option with the modification, option five, with

1 | whatever that inch would be -- 40, 41 inches -- would be the
2 | preferable way to go. Of course, I think everybody would
3 | agree, hey, we want to two fish. That modified department
4 | option, hey, that would be great but realistically I believe
5 | that is overkill.

6 | Probably last spring I ran, I don't know, 30-
7 | something charters. I didn't count them today before I came.
8 | Over 42 inches in 30-something charters? I am going to say it
9 | wasn't over 20 fish in 32 charters. And I fish the tournament
10 | and have fished the tournament since its inception. And last
11 | year and the year before were pretty piss poor.

12 | The whole thing about shutting -- the bait year with
13 | a 36 to a 41- or 42-inch fish and being the fish of a lifetime
14 | and that is what they are there for? Basically that is it
15 | right there.

16 | (Showing cell phone photo)

17 | A cell phone picture. Not very many fish are
18 | getting mounted anymore. That is it. An hour or two later,
19 | after they are all fileted on the table, they all look the
20 | same. They are all steaks. That is it. It is the picture.

21 | So if you caught that 36- to 42-inch fish and threw
22 | it back, it would look the same on the filet table because you
23 | have caught an alternate fish to take home and cook. And I
24 | have been saying that for years. Protect the big fish. So
25 | the option five, above 28 to 36 with a 40 would be great, or a

1 41. I think that is our preference.

2 And really think about that deal with them being
3 fileted up. It is crazy. It is all about a picture. Knock
4 them in the head, filet them up, you would never know the
5 difference. That is it.

6 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Marty. I am sorry,
7 sir. I don't know your name but you can introduce yourself.

8 MR. PAYNE: My name is Drew Payne from the charter
9 boat --- . I am here for myself. First I think this is a
10 total joke that we are even here having this conversation. I
11 think it should just be left alone.

12 Last year I ran -- I have got my last year book. I
13 ran 42 trips between April 19th and May 15th. I had -- I
14 caught 175 fish over 36 inches. I caught 99 fish between 28
15 and 36 inches. I had 7 fish over 42 inches in that whole
16 timeframe, just so you get an idea of what we are dealing
17 with.

18 I don't have the answers. I have got lots of
19 opinions. As for what I think we should and shouldn't do, I
20 would like to just see it left alone. But I guess that is not
21 going to happen but that is just my input. What Marty
22 Simounet says, you know, he has got good ideas in the
23 association also. Dave, I even agree with Dave, some of what
24 Dave said tonight was right on for a change, and normally I
25 don't agree.

1 It would be nice to come up with some sort of
2 number, and I don't have that number to come up with but these
3 are tough decisions here. It would be nice to spend a little
4 more time. I know, like they said, we have had time to think
5 this over. You are not going to please everybody.

6 I don't know what the answer is. I wish someone
7 would come up with something that would be fair for everybody
8 and make everybody happy.

9 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you. Okay, so we have a
10 motion on the table to add the fifth option. How about
11 if -- is there any further discussion on that? Like to get a
12 vote done so we can move on. Everyone understand the motion?
13 All in favor, raise your hand, please.

14 (Show of hands)

15 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Opposed?

16 (Show of hands)

17 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Abstentions?

18 (Show of hands)

19 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Okay, we have got one opposed,
20 two abstentions, and the rest are for. I didn't get the
21 number on that. Did we get it?

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Nine.

23 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Nine for. So motion passes. We
24 have a fifth option. Does everyone understand all five of the
25 options now -- four laid out and the department's presentation

1 and the one we just voted on? Can we as a commission, pass
2 one of those or adopt one of those by motion as our
3 recommendation to the department? Does anyone want to offer a
4 motion or comment? Jim?

5 MR. GRACIE: I move that we not vote on any of the
6 alternatives tonight. Part of that motion should that you
7 should give people an opportunity to go back to their
8 organizations and give their feedback, and in spite of the
9 lack of transparency I am comfortable with you making a
10 decision after you get that feedback. That is the motion. If
11 you can shorten that to something.

12 MR. SIKORSKI: I would say that I agree with Jim.
13 And if everybody agrees then we don't need the motion per se.
14 But I agree with Jim. I think you have heard a lot from us
15 today and there are options out there. We have got them on
16 the -- seems to be relatively popular. But you have gotten a
17 lot of feedback and I trust in your abilities to make an
18 honest decision without transparency of this meeting or an
19 actual motion.

20 I don't think you are going to get a unanimous
21 motion or opinion. So that is what you see.

22 MR. O'CONNELL: So if we go down this path, would
23 Friday be enough time for you guys to follow up?

24 MR. : You just want an e-mail from us?

25 MR. O'CONNELL: E-mail or phone, whatever is easier.

1 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: How does everyone around the
2 table feel about that?

3 MR. : Sure.

4 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Everyone understand where we are?

5 MR. O'BRIEN: The Maryland Charter Boat Association
6 will get you a letter by the end of this week.

7 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Thank you, Ed. Okay. Then that
8 is our resolution. Appreciate that. We have obviously gone
9 over our time. Tom, you want to comment on what we need to
10 hit and what we can wait until next meeting on?

11 MR. O'CONNELL: I could probably give you in 10
12 minutes an update on the remainder of the agenda items. So
13 you guys have 10 minutes?

14 MR. GRACIE: I apologize. I can't.

15 MR. SIKORSKI: Can I talk about one thing?

16 MR. O'CONNELL: I got that folded in here. I
17 figured I would ask you about that.

18 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: That is in here. Legislative?
19 That is in here.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: All right, so if you have to leave,
21 that is fine. The people who want to hang around -- if people
22 have to leave, I just ask that you go out in the hallway so we
23 can hear each other talk. And in about 10 minutes, I will
24 just go through these items here.

25 MR. SIKORSKI: I am asking for the commission's

1 support.

2 ***Other Business***

3 MR. O'CONNELL: I probably should have started with
4 that first, Dave. Inland fisheries: Don Cosden, 42-year
5 employee at the DNR Fisheries -- anybody who has got
6 conversation, please take it in the hallway. And thanks,
7 everybody for coming.

8 He retired at the end of the year. We are currently
9 recruiting a new person for that position. We will let you
10 know when we find out.

11 Angler Preference Survey: Scott Knoche is here. I
12 will just jump in for him. Scott comes from the state of
13 Michigan where he did a lot of survey work with recreational
14 anglers to try to get angler attitudes and angler preferences.

15 He has been working with our inland fisheries staff
16 and working on a survey for 2016. So we have got a lot of
17 time before that but we just want to let you know we are
18 working on that. And we can provide an opportunity to share
19 with you some of the questions for that survey.

20 But hopefully that will give us some information as
21 to what -- you know, some attitudes and preferences.

22 Tidal Bass Roundtable Meeting: We do this annually.
23 This is for the large-mouth bass fishery. That is going to be
24 planned sometime in mid- to late February. It hasn't been set
25 yet.

1 MR. TRAGESER: More late February. Joe just put
2 a --- out --

3 MR. O'CONNELL: So late February?

4 MR. TRAGESER: -- within the last two weeks of
5 February.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: All right. There has been a lot
7 going on with tidal bass so it will be a great meeting to go
8 to --

9 MR. TRAGESER: I would encourage anybody who has not
10 been to one before to, you know, stop in and just take a look.
11 It gets pretty lively after a while.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: So we will inform everybody when
13 that meeting is set. Legislative updates: As you can expect
14 with a new administration, bills are slowly coming in
15 initially, slower than normal. We only have one fisheries
16 service bill, and it is a housecleaning bill. And when that
17 gets filed we will share that with everybody but it is nothing
18 significant. It is just housecleaning.

19 Dave and Dave Smith met with me and our marketing
20 person Steve Vilnit about a month ago to talk further about
21 this 365-day license idea.

22 We brought this before the commission sometime last
23 summer to look at going away from a calendar year to offering
24 an individual 365 days from the time they bought their
25 license. Virginia has it right now. It has been all

1 positive, so big kudos to Dave, who took the initiative to
2 meet with some legislators.

3 He did that earlier today and wanted to give
4 everybody an update, I think, and look for the support of this
5 commission so that he can say he has the support. So Dave,
6 did you want to just --

7 MR. SIKORSKI: I have been waiting for one of my
8 delegates or senators to be on a committee, the Environmental
9 Committee. As it turns I have a senator and a delegate on the
10 proper committee.

11 So I met with them today jointly and sat down with
12 the senator and explained to her all the information with
13 regard to the 365-day license bill. And she said, well, what
14 is the other side going to say? And I told her there isn't
15 one. And she said, well, what is the department going to say?
16 I said, it is their idea. She said, son, keep bringing me
17 stuff like that.

18 What it is, is right now, as you all know, we buy
19 our license, it is valid from January 1st to December 31st as
20 private recreational anglers. What will happen in the future,
21 if this bill is successful, is we will purchase our license
22 and then our license will be valid for 365 days. So you get
23 more bang for your buck.

24 With regard to the boat sticker, the private boat
25 sticker, it will be a 12-month sticker. The department has

1 shared that they are able to process this accordingly. If you
2 go into any place where you might buy your license, you will
3 receive a printout, proof that you purchased your license.
4 You can go fishing. And it counts as your boat sticker.

5 Sometime after that, the department will process it
6 and mail you your actual decal. So you will have proof. You
7 can show an officer if checked, but you will get your physical
8 decal, which will be good for 12 months.

9 MR. O'CONNELL: So rather than it just having a
10 year, it will have a month and a year. So we have got to
11 process that and mail it out. But you will leave there with a
12 receipt to go fishing.

13 MR. DEHOFF: So it will be like your license plate
14 where you get a sticker with an expiration date, not just an
15 annual thing.

16 MR. SIKORSKI: And with regard to the charter boat
17 industry, I talked to Phil, I talked to Greg Jetton, I talked
18 to Marty, I talked to a couple other guys from the south.
19 They seemed to be in agreement so --- boat guys have to renew
20 their commercial license in -- September 1st. It expires
21 August 31st.

22 And it sounds like the charter boat portion of their
23 fishing license, the charter boat decal, will then just be
24 on --- with everything else they have to do and they will
25 renew it all in one fell swoop in September. I think I have

1 the support of the charter industry. I am just looking for
2 the support of the whole commission. Senator Gail Bates and
3 Delegate Robert Flanagan, both from Howard County, will be the
4 initial sponsors of this bill and they are drafting it
5 currently.

6 The will be working with the department's staff to
7 make sure it is drafted properly the first time. Then we can
8 look for other sponsors, co-sponsors. So if you want an easy
9 bill and an opportunity to get to know your representatives,
10 you might be willing to take it around and -- you can
11 coordinate with me and I will keep everybody updated on it.

12 What I will ask Bill to do, or maybe I will do it,
13 is draft a letter of unanimous support from the sport fish
14 commission, and I guess we will do that via e-mail.

15 MR. O'CONNELL: And just on the charter boat decal,
16 right now you buy on a calendar year but you are required to
17 have your commercial FTR license.

18 So the idea is to put the charter boat decal on the
19 same cycle as the commercial and knowing that is September 1,
20 the first year this bill passes, when you went in January 1st,
21 we would prorate it for just 8 months. And then September 1
22 you would pay annually. So you wouldn't feel like you were
23 paying twice. All right. Thanks, Dave.

24 Last item is marketing. We have talked a little bit
25 about better promotion marketing of our sport charter

1 fisheries. We had legislation last year that allowed the
2 department to offer discounts for hunting and fishing licenses
3 up to 50 percent for individuals who have not purchased a
4 license for the last three years.

5 We kicked that off during the last part of December
6 and January. It is only for residents, and it is for the main
7 licenses like your nontidal and your tidal. It is not all the
8 sublicenses. So if you haven't bought a license for three
9 years, you get a 50-percent discount. The licensing computer
10 system is set up so it automatically tells you that.

11 If you have always bought a tidal license, now is
12 the time to get a 50-percent discount on your nontidal. Hope
13 to get people to try something different, and vice versa.
14 Nontidal can try tidal.

15 We have got some preliminary statistics, and you
16 have your handouts, but so far it appears it has been very
17 successful. If you see your handout, look at the percent
18 increase from the previous year, and, you know, we are getting
19 some repeat buyers so these are people who have bought a
20 license but -- well, repeat buyers are those who have bought
21 like a tidal license and now have taken advantage of the
22 nontidal discount, and vice versa.

23 And we have seen about 250 people take advantage of
24 that just in the first few weeks of the program. We have
25 first-time buyers. These are people whom we have no record of

1 | in the database, as far as it goes back, that they have bought
2 | a fishing license. And we have 360 people do that. And
3 | lapsed anglers. These are the people who -- they used to fish
4 | but they haven't fished in the last three years, and they have
5 | come back.

6 | So overall we have had about 800 people take
7 | advantage of the discount for just the first few weeks. It
8 | ends January 31st. And then we will look for other
9 | opportunities throughout the year to turn the sale back on and
10 | off.

11 | One thing that we learned from this, and we expected
12 | it is, you know, loyal customers -- why are you giving
13 | discounts to people who aren't fishing? And we have been
14 | thinking about that, and we have made it clear that we
15 | appreciate our loyal customers. They are the people who have
16 | paid for conservation management.

17 | And we are looking to begin next year with a program
18 | that offers some rewards for the loyal customers. You know,
19 | we have got to think about that, and we may come back to you
20 | about what is meaningful? Is it a possibility of a fishing
21 | trip or a packaged tackle deal? Is it something that you
22 | can -- it is going to be some really wild ideas about maybe
23 | you get like a credit card for your license, like a platinum.

24 | You know, you have been here five years and ten
25 | years and 15 years. Like an employee-recognition program,

1 service time. And maybe you can get some tackle shops in the
2 area that offer a small discount to people who have so many
3 years into a license.

4 So we are going -- we have that on our radar. We
5 are going to have something for next year. But initially it
6 seems to be fairly successful.

7 And I appreciate -- I think it was Micah or was it
8 you, Mark, who gave me an alert of a little glitch in the
9 system early on, and we got that fixed. So the first month we
10 have learned a few things, and we have corrected them, and it
11 should only get better as we go forward.

12 We appreciate everybody's support in trying to get
13 the word out about this. The whole goal is to try to get
14 people back. And then hope our fisheries are enough here to
15 keep them buying year in and year out. And with that, that is
16 the last agenda item. Any questions on any of those topics I
17 covered really quickly?

18 DR. MORGAN: I certainly appreciate the senior
19 license.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: That is our biggest growing trend
21 right now. Regarding striped bass, if you have any more
22 information, please get it to me by Friday. Earlier is even
23 better. And do you have any --

24 MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: Sorry, everybody. We had an
25 issue with the doors automatically locking at 5:00 p.m. All

1 | good. Does anybody else have anything before we adjourn?

2 | MR. O'CONNELL: Paul Genovese. I should have
3 | introduced Paul in the beginning of the meeting. He has been
4 | with the department for a long time. But if you haven't met
5 | him, this is Paul. He is going to be filling in the role of
6 | liaison. So if you need questions, send Paul an e-mail or
7 | give him a call.

8 | MR. GOLDSBOROUGH: All right. Thank you,
9 | everybody. We are adjourned.

10 | (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.)
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