



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

2020 Summer Meeting Webinar Summary

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

2020 Summer Meeting Webinar
August 3-6, 2020

Toni Kerns, ISFMP, or
Tina Berger, Communications
For more information, please contact
the identified individual at
703.842.0740

Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 3 & 4, 2020)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Board Initiates Amendment 7 to Address Longstanding Fishery Management Issues

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board initiated the development of an Amendment to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan. As the first step in the development of a new FMP or amendment, the Public Information Document (PID) will focus on the following management topics: (1) fishery goals and objectives; (2) stock rebuilding/timeframe; (3) management triggers; (4) biological reference points; (5) regional management (recreational measures, coastal and producer areas, regional reference points); (6) recreational discard mortality; (7) conservation equivalency; (8) recreational accountability; and (9) coastal commercial quota allocation. The purpose of the PID is to solicit stakeholder input on prioritizing the importance of each topic for continued development and inclusion in the Draft Amendment.

“Now that Addendum VI measures are in place and stock rebuilding has been initiated, the Board can focus on addressing a number of issues that have been at the forefront of striped bass management for a long time,” stated Board Chair David Borden of Rhode Island.

Between the Spring and Summer Meetings, a Work Group of Board members met to discuss significant issues facing striped bass management. The Board agreed that all of the issues discussed by the Work Group are extremely important and complex, and deserve significant thought and consideration. Furthermore, the prioritization of issues to be addressed by the Amendment should be guided by stakeholder input.

“Given it’s been 17 years since the Board last considered a new plan amendment to the striped bass management program, the Board intends to be very thoughtful and deliberative as it proceeds with the development of this Amendment,” stated Mr. Borden. “It’s important that we provide the public with sufficient background information in order to solicit effective feedback from all stakeholders and ensure the Draft Amendment addresses the most pressing issues at this time.”

During its deliberations, Board members discussed the importance of addressing discard mortality in recreational striped bass fisheries given discards significantly contribute to total fishing mortality. As a result, the Board tasked the Plan Development Team and Technical Committee to review factors limiting the accuracy of discard mortality estimates for stock assessment purposes, and to identify potential actions that could improve understanding or help reduce discard mortality in the fishery.

The Work Group Report, which can be found [here](#), will serve as the foundation of the Draft PID. The Board will review the first draft of the PID at the Commission’s Annual Meeting in October. At that meeting, the Board will determine if the PID is ready to be sent out for public comment or if further modifications to the document are needed. Given current, and possibly future, meeting restrictions due to COVID-19, public hearings may be conducted via webinar.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

PR20-16

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board reviewed and approved the 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and compliance report. It also reviewed the Striped Bass Board Work Group Report, which describes significant issues facing striped bass management. The Board supported inclusion of the Work Group's recommendations in the Public Information Document for the newly initiated amendment (see above press release).

The Board considered two postponed motions from previous meetings. The first postponed motion (and its amended motion) addressed the initiation of the amendment (see above press release). The second postponed motion, which considered accountability measures for states that do not achieve their predicted reduction in 2020 relative to Addendum VI measures, was postponed indefinitely with the recognition that evaluating 2020 recreational fishery performance will be difficult due to the data limitations caused by COVID-19. Recreational accountability will also be addressed in the newly initiated amendment.

Lastly, the Board elected Martin Gary (PRFC) as Vice Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve the 2020 Fishery Management Plan Review and state compliance reports for Atlantic striped bass.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion stands approved without objection.

Postponed Motions from April 2019

Main Motion

Move to initiate an Amendment to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan to address the needed consideration for change on the issues of fishery goals and objectives, empirical/biological/spatial reference points, management triggers, rebuilding biomass, and area-specific management. Work on this amendment will begin upon the completion of the previously discussed addendum to the management plan.

Motion postponed indefinitely.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to add reallocation of commercial quota between states.

Motion postponed indefinitely.

Move to postpone indefinitely the motions made during the April 2019 meeting of the Board.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion is adopted by consensus.

I move to initiate an Amendment to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan focused on the following management topics: (1) fishery goals and objectives; (2) stock rebuilding/timeframe; (3) management triggers; (4) biological reference points; (5) regional management (recreational measures, coastal and producer areas, regional reference points); (6) recreational discard mortality; (7) conservation equivalency; (8) recreational accountability; and (9) coastal commercial quota allocation. Each of these topics will be presented in a Public Information Document in order to solicit

stakeholder comment focused on prioritizing the importance of each topic for continued development and inclusion in the Amendment.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Ms. Ware. Motion passes (15 in favor, 1 opposed).

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to remove part 9: coastal commercial quota allocation from the initial motion.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion fails (2 in favor, 12 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to task the Plan Development Team/Technical Committee to begin developing methods to better understand discards in the fishery

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes (15 in favor).

Move to elect Marty Gary as Vice Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Miller. Motion passes.

Postponed Motion from February 2020

Move to task the Plan Review Team to review state reductions in the Fishery Management Plan Review of the 2020 fishing year. If a state is below their predicted target reduction, the Board may direct a state to modify measures for the following fishing year to achieve the target reduction.

Move to postpone indefinitely, with the intention to address accountability in the initiated amendment.

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion passes (12 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention, 1 null).

ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM COORDINATING COUNCIL (AUGUST 3, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The ACCSP Coordinating Council met to review the governance survey results and receive updates on committee and program activities. As part of the consent agenda, the Council also approved minutes from its May 2020 meeting. The Council noted the governance transition has successfully improved ACCSP visibility among partners and stakeholders and allowed for full integration with ASMFC management and science programs. The majority of respondents feel better informed, engaged, and invigorated. This change is due to both ASMFC integration and ACCSP leadership. All respondents agree ACCSP is advancing its mission to produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries that are collected, processed, and disseminated according to common standards agreed upon by all program partners.

The Council voiced appreciation of the monthly committee newsletters and distribution of program updates with meeting materials. ACCSP remains on track to address items in the 2020 Action Plan.

For more information, please contact Geoff White, ACCSP Director, at Geoff.white@accsp.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 3, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board (Board) met to consider Cobia Draft Addendum I for public comment, approve a cobia commercial trigger for the 2020 fishing year, discuss timelines for implementing upcoming actions, and approve Terms of Reference for the 2020 Red Drum Simulation Assessment.

Atlantic Cobia Draft Addendum I

The Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia). The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to the 2020 harvest specification, which established a new total harvest quota based on the results of the 2020 Atlantic cobia benchmark stock assessment. Under Amendment 1, 92% of the total quota is allocated to the recreational fishery, and 8% is allocated to the commercial fishery.

The Draft Addendum proposes strategies that could reduce commercial percent allocations, without reducing the commercial quota below its 2019 level (50,000 pounds). Options for lower commercial allocations were proposed because of a large increase in the 2020-2022 total quota, which resulted in a larger commercial quota (as 8% of the total). The higher overall quota is due, in part, to the increase in recreational catch estimates that resulted from the 2018 calibration of recreational data to the new, mail-based Fishing Effort Survey conducted by the Marine Recreational Information Program. The updated recreational data were incorporated into the 2020 assessment, which estimated a greater abundance of fish than the previous assessment and provided the basis for the 2020-2022 total quota.

The Draft Addendum additionally proposes changes to the calculation of the commercial trigger (determines whether an in-season coastwide commercial closure occurs) and *de minimis* measures (applied to states with relatively little commercial or recreational harvest). The current trigger calculation method is dependent on recent harvests meeting the current or upcoming quota. Proposed changes to the commercial trigger would allow this trigger to be calculated based on harvests in the most recent 5 years, regardless of the size of the harvests relative to a quota. Proposed changes to *de minimis* measures include consideration of a cap on the amount of the commercial quota that can be set aside to account for harvest in commercial *de minimis* states as well as increasing the alternative recreational minimum size limit, which can be adopted by recreational *de minimis* states that choose not to adopt the measures of a neighboring or nearest non-*de minimis* state.

It is anticipated that states from New Jersey through Georgia will conduct public hearings on the Draft Addendum via webinar; a subsequent press release will announce the details of those hearings once they become finalized.

Commercial Trigger

In May 2020, the Cobia Technical Committee (TC) submitted a memo to the Board describing an alternative method for calculation the commercial trigger. Development of this method was necessary because the method described in Amendment 1 requires recent harvests to meet the current or upcoming quota, which is not the case for the commercial quota resulting from the 2020 harvest specification. Therefore, the TC developed a more flexible alternative method that can be applied regardless of past harvest levels relative to a quota. The Board approved this method for use in 2020, setting a commercial trigger of 135,422 pounds. If the non-*de minimis* (Virginia-South Carolina)

commercial harvest tracked in-season meets or exceeds this amount, a coastwide commercial closure would begin 30 days later. As of July 30, harvest among non-*de minimis* states was 29,488 pounds. Virginia and North Carolina have agreed to close their commercial fisheries if their cumulative harvest reaches 73,000 pounds.

Atlantic Cobia Implementation Timelines

The Board discussed upcoming timelines related to implementation of the new cobia harvest quotas from the 2020 specification, along with any potential changes to allocations from Draft Addendum I (considered for final approval in October 2020), so that state measures reflective of these quotas can be implemented in 2021. This involves submission of implementation plans shortly after the October Board meeting, then review by the Cobia Technical Committee and Board via email or webinar before the end of 2020.

Red Drum Terms of Reference

Finally, the Board approved Terms of Reference for the Red Drum Simulation Assessment. The Simulation Assessment will simulate a population with the characteristics of red drum then apply and compare performance of multiple stock assessment models to determine the most appropriate model to be used in the next benchmark stock assessment. The Simulation Assessment will undergo a peer review specific to that project prior to the next benchmark assessment.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve Cobia Draft Addendum I to Amendment 1 for public comment as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion approved by consent.

Move to approve a Cobia Commercial Trigger of 135,422 pounds for 2020. If commercial harvest estimated through in-season monitoring meets or exceeds this amount, a coastwide commercial closure for the remainder of the year will begin 30 days later.

Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Bell. Motion is approved by consensus.

Move to approve Terms of Reference for the Red Drum Simulation Assessment as presented.

Motion made by Mr. Bell and seconded by Mr. Estes. Motion stands approved by consensus.

SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2020)

Press Release

American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Find Coastwide Abundance Remains Depleted

Arlington, VA – The 2020 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicate American shad remain depleted on a coastwide basis. Multiple factors, such as overfishing, inadequate fish passage at dams, predation, pollution, water withdrawals, channelization of rivers, changing ocean conditions, and climate change are likely responsible for shad decline from historic abundance levels. Additionally, the assessment finds that shad recovery is limited by restricted access to spawning habitat.

Current barriers partly or completely block 40% of historic shad spawning habitat, which may equate to a loss of more than a third of spawning adults. The “depleted” determination was used instead of “overfished” because the impact of fishing on American shad stocks cannot be separated from the impacts of all other factors responsible for changes in abundance. The benchmark assessment was endorsed by the Peer Review Panel and accepted by the Shad & River Herring Management Board (Board) for management use.

“On behalf of the Board, I want to commend the members of the Shad Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee for their outstanding work on the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment Report,” stated Board Chair Dr. Michael Armstrong from Massachusetts. “This is a considerable body of work that substantially advances our understanding of the challenges facing American shad stocks along the Atlantic coast. It certainly has given the Board a lot to think about regarding next steps in management to improve population resiliency. Given the stock-specific nature of shad management, the Board has tasked the Technical Committee with identifying potential paths forward to improve shad stocks along the coast considering the assessment results.”

Coastwide adult mortality is unknown, but was determined to be unsustainable for some system-specific stocks, indicating the continued need for management action to reduce adult mortality. Specifically, adult mortality was determined to be unsustainable for three stocks – Connecticut,

Summary of American Shad Stock & Habitat Conditions				
System	Historic Riverine Habitat Currently Unobstructed	Abundance Trends (2005-2017)	Adult Status*	
			Total Mortality Rate	Abundance
Merrymeeting Bay	50.02%	YOY: No trend Adults: No data	Unknown	Unknown
Merrimack	17.83%	YOY: No data Adults: Increasing trend	Unknown	Unknown
Pawcatuck	19.21%	YOY: No data Adults: Increasing trend	Unknown	Unknown
Connecticut	45.19%	YOY: No trend Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 1 no trend)	Unsustainable	Unknown
Hudson	89.24%	YOY: No trend Adults: No trend	Sustainable	Depleted
Delaware	72.05%	YOY: No trends (2 indices) Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 1 no trend)	Unsustainable	Unknown
Nanticoke	100%	YOY: Declining trend Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Unknown	Unknown
Susquehanna & Upper Chesapeake	4.38%	YOY: No trend Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Unknown	Unknown
Patuxent	100%	YOY: No data Adults: No trend	Unknown	Unknown
Potomac	90.02%	YOY: No trend Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Unsustainable	Unknown
Rappahannock	95.98%	YOY: Increasing trend Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Sustainable	Unknown
York	87.42%	YOY: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 2 no trends) Adults: No trend	Sustainable	Unknown
James	72.77%	YOY: No trend Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Unknown	Unknown
Albemarle Sound	58.92%	YOY: Increasing trend Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (2 no trends, 1 increasing)	Sustainable	Not overfished
Tar-Pamlico	75.68%	YOY: No data Adults: No trend	Unknown	Unknown
Neuse	90.05%	YOY: No data Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 1 no trend)	Sustainable	Unknown
Cape Fear	46.59%	YOY: No data Adults: Increasing trends (2 indices)	Unknown	Unknown
Winyah Bay	73.13%	YOY: No data Adults: Conflicting trends (1 increasing, 2 no trend)	Unknown	Unknown
Santee-Cooper	20.95%	YOY: No data Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 2 no trend)	Unknown	Unknown
ACE Basin	82.28%	YOY: No data Adults: No trend	Unknown	Unknown
Savannah	59.19%	YOY: No data Adults: No trends (2 indices)	Unknown	Unknown
Altamaha	82.24%	YOY: No data Adults: Conflicting trends between indices (1 increasing, 1 no trend)	Unknown	Unknown
St Johns	90.04%	YOY: No trend Adults: Increasing trend	Unknown	Unknown
Coastwide		YOY: NA Adult: Conflicting trends between indices	Unknown	Depleted

* The status determinations identified in the table for total mortality and abundance are for adults only. System-specific data on juvenile American shad as they transition from young-of-the-year (YOY) to mature spawning adults are unavailable, which can impact overall status determinations.

Delaware, and Potomac – and sustainable for five stocks – Hudson, Rappahannock, York, Albemarle Sound, and Neuse (see table on page 2 for information by system). The terms “sustainable” and “unsustainable” were used instead of “not overfishing” and “overfishing” because fishing mortality cannot be separated from other components contributing to total mortality. Though adult mortality was determined to be sustainable for some system-specific stocks, it is important to note that maintaining sustainable adult mortality will not result in favorable abundance status if juvenile mortality is unsustainable. Unfortunately, juvenile mortality status cannot be determined due to insufficient data collection in all systems; without these determinations, significant uncertainty remains in assessment advice for management of American shad. Thus, the recovery of American shad will need to address multiple factors including anthropogenic (human-caused) habitat alterations, predation by non-native predators, and exploitation by fisheries. The assessment also highlights the need for stock composition monitoring data in order to separate the impacts of fishing from other factors driving American shad population dynamics in future stock assessments.

In evaluating the stock assessment, the Peer Review Panel stated, “It is noteworthy that the amount of new data, particularly following recommendations of the last benchmark assessment, and the level of new analyses takes the assessment up a significant level from prior benchmarks, and reflects a culmination of understanding of the species and attempts to manage it.” Further, the Panel noted two systems (Potomac and Albemarle Sound) had sufficient data for use in data-rich statistical catch-at-age models and, for the first time, a coastwide habitat assessment of continental waters was undertaken, with specific reference to dams and passage as impediments to sustainable stocks. Finally, the Panel stated, “there is growing recognition that the suite of in-river predators on juvenile shad is shifting, due to introductions/invasions of non-native species such as various catfishes, pike, black bass, snakeheads, etc. Predators can have a disproportionately large impact on year class success when fish populations are at such low levels, as is currently the case, threatening resilience.”

A more detailed overview of the stock assessment, as well as the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, on the Shad and River Herring webpage under stock assessment reports. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR20-14

Meeting Summary

The Shad and River Herring Management Board (Board) met to consider acceptance of the 2020 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report (see above press release), consider state proposals to resolve management inconsistencies with Amendments 2 and 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP), receive updates on the Technical Expert Working Group for River Herring (TEWG) and the status of shad habitat plan updates, and elect a Vice Chair to the Board.

After considering and accepting the 2020 American Shad Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report, the Board also considered a number of proposals to resolve management inconsistencies with Amendments 2 (river herring) and 3 (shad), which were identified by the Technical Committee (TC) in October 2019. These inconsistencies included tributaries not being explicitly addressed in existing sustainable fishery management plans (SFMPs), rivers remaining open to harvest with an SFMP but without sufficient monitoring, and rivers open to recreational harvest without an SFMP and/or monitoring, but where little or no harvest is suspected. Proposals to update existing SFMPs, implement

new SFMPs or alternative management plans (AMPs), and/or modify harvest regulations were presented for Maine, New Hampshire, the Delaware River Basin, the State of Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Consistent with the TC recommendations and Advisory Panel support for the proposed management programs, the Board approved all proposals presented. The TC will continue to develop recommendations for improvements to the FMP to provide additional guidance for sustainability metrics, SFMP and AMP requirements, and incorporating stock assessment information.

In addition to the state proposals, New Hampshire informed the Board that low river herring passage in 2019 and 2020 has resulted in noncompliance with the SFMP fishery-independent sustainability target of a 3-year average return to New Hampshire coastal rivers of 72,450 river herring. New Hampshire reported that the target was not met due to fish counter malfunctions and other variables resulting in gross underestimations of run counts at the Cocheco River Fishway and Pickpocket Dam on the Exeter River. Based on this information, New Hampshire requested an exemption from their River Herring SFMP requirement to close the fishery in 2020. The state plans to close the river herring season in 2021 and remain closed until the 3-year average reaches the target for river herring returns. The TC supported this approach, and the Board agreed to grant the exemption for the 2020 fishery.

Next, staff provided two updates on the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG) activities. First, NOAA Fisheries has secured funding for a contractor to work on revising the River Herring Conservation Plan produced by the TEWG in 2015. The goal of this work will be to update and synthesize information on river herring threats, data and research needs, and recommended conservation actions into one document to support management, conservation, and restoration efforts for river herring along the Atlantic coast. Second, a new name for the TEWG is under consideration to better reflect the change in the group's function from a work-based group to an information exchange forum.

Staff also updated the Board on the status of the American shad habitat plans, which are required by Amendment 3. In October 2019, the Board requested the states update existing plans and produce new plans for the Hudson and Merrimac Rivers, however, the states have encountered delays due to COVID-19. Therefore, the Board agreed to delay the review of updated plans to the ASMFC 2021 Winter Meeting.

Finally, the Board elected Dr. Justin Davis from Connecticut to the role of Vice Chair. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to accept the 2020 American Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion accepted by consensus.

Move to task the Technical Committee with identifying for the Board potential paths forward to improve shad stocks given the results of the stock assessment.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes by consensus.

Move to approve the state proposals for shad and river herring management as presented today.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Woodward. Motion passes by consensus.

Move to approve New Hampshire’s request for an exemption from their River Herring SFMP requirement to close the fishery in 2020 based on data indicating that passage counts for the most recent three-year average did not meet the sustainability target of 72,450 fish. This exemption is based on explanatory information supporting the claim that passage counts are low due to equipment failure and other variables, rather than true fish passage numbers.

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Miller. Motion passes by consensus.

Move to elect Dr. Justin Davis as Vice Chair of the Shad and River Herring Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. Kane and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion carries by consensus.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4 & 5, 2020)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Adopts Ecological Reference Points

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved the use of ecological reference points (ERPs) in the management of Atlantic menhaden. By adopting ERPs, the Board will be accounting for the species’ role as an important forage fish. The 2020 Atlantic menhaden benchmark assessments, which were endorsed by an independent panel of fisheries scientists, used the Northwest Atlantic Coastal Shelf Model of Intermediate Complexity for Ecosystems (NWACS-MICE) in combination with the single-species model (Beaufort Assessment Model or BAM) to develop Atlantic menhaden ERPs by evaluating trade-offs between menhaden harvest and predator biomass.

“The Board took another important step in managing Atlantic menhaden in a broader ecosystem context,” stated Board Chair Spud Woodward of Georgia. “It’s the culmination of more than a decade of effort by state, federal, and academic scientists to develop ERPs that reflect menhaden’s role as a key food source for several fish species. These ERPs are not a silver bullet to resolve all our fisheries management issues, and the models on which they are based will continue to evolve. However, the use of ERPs for menhaden management will enhance the success of predator management by providing a more abundant forage base for rebuilding predator fish populations. It is important for us to keep those rebuilding efforts on track through the use of proven management tools such as controls on fishing mortality.”

In February and May, the Board tasked the ERP Work Group with additional analyses to explore the ERPs sensitivity to a range of ecosystem scenarios (different assumptions about fishing mortality for other key predator and prey species) and Atlantic herring biomass. These analyses suggested the original scenario (ERP target and threshold outlined below) most closely approximates short-term conditions for the ecosystem. As a result, the ERP Work Group recommended using the original scenario ERPs presented in the assessment report. Moving forward, the ERPs for Atlantic menhaden are:

ERP target: the maximum fishing mortality rate (F) on Atlantic menhaden that sustains Atlantic striped bass at their biomass target when striped bass are fished at their F target

ERP threshold: the maximum F on Atlantic menhaden that keeps Atlantic striped bass at their biomass threshold when striped bass are fished at their F target

Atlantic striped bass was the focal species for the ERP definitions because it was the most sensitive predator fish species to Atlantic menhaden harvest in the model, so an ERP target and threshold that sustained striped bass would likely provide sufficient forage for other predators under current ecosystem conditions. For the development of the ERPS, all other focal species in the model (bluefish, weakfish, spiny dogfish, and Atlantic herring) were assumed to be fished at 2017 levels.

In addition to adopting ERPs, the Board discussed setting fishery specifications for 2021-2022. In 2017, the Board set the total allowable catch (TAC) at 216,000 metric tons for 2018-2019, and then maintained that TAC for 2020 with the expectation that it would be set in future years using ERPs. With the adoption of ERPs, the Board tasked the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee to run a projection analysis to provide a variety of TAC scenarios and their risk of exceeding the ERP F target to compare in setting specifications for 2021-2022. The Board will review the projection analysis at the Annual Meeting in October and then determine a TAC for 2021-2022. As stated in Amendment 3, if a TAC is not set at the Annual Meeting, the TAC from the previous year will be maintained.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR20-15

Motions

Postponed Motions from February 2020

An Atlantic menhaden ecological reference point fishing mortality rate (F) target equal to the maximum F on Atlantic menhaden that maintains Atlantic striped bass at its biomass target when striped bass is fished at its F target and all other ERP species as defined in the NWACS-MICE model are fished at their status quo F rates.

An Atlantic menhaden ecological reference point F threshold equal to the maximum F on Atlantic menhaden that maintains Atlantic striped bass at its biomass threshold when striped bass is fished at its F target and other ERP species as defined in the NWACS-MICE model are fished at their status quo F rates.

Motions approved unanimously (18 in favor).

Move to elect Mel Bell as Vice-chair to the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. Rhodes and seconded by Mr. Murphey. Motion approved unanimously.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AUGUST 5, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to discuss a number of issues, including the FY21 Budget; a proposed policy on ASMFC contracts; a CARES Act update; Management & Science Committee (MSC) recommendations regarding improvements to Advisory Panel (AP) and Public Input process; Pennsylvania's participation on the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board and consideration of dividing the South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- FY21 Budget – The Budget was reviewed by the Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC) and forwarded to the Executive Committee with a recommendation for approval. The motion to approve passed unanimously.
- Policy on Commission Contracts – The AOC discussed proposed Policy on Commission Contracts and forwarded to the Executive Committee with a recommendation for approval. The motion to approve passed unanimously.
- Mr. Beal gave an update on the CARES Act, and Ms. Kelly Denit from NMFS fielded questions about the CARES Act. The states posed a number of questions to Ms. Denit and she will provide the responses to Mr. Beal and he will provide the responses to the member of the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee received a report on the MSC recommendations regarding AP and the public input process; after much discussion the MSC was asked to continue working on their recommendations, in light of the discussion.
- Mr. Beal gave an update on the status of the Pennsylvania’s membership on the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board. The Commission’s legal counsel Sean Donahue, is in the process of writing a letter to Pennsylvania with his opinion regarding their participation on the Board.
- The discussion regarding dividing the South Atlantic Board was postponed to a subsequent meeting.
- The Executive Committee conducted the annual performance review of the Commission’s Executive Director in a closed session.

For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

On behalf of the Administrative Oversight Committee, move approval of the FY21 Budget.

Motion made by Spud Woodward. Motion passed unanimously.

On behalf of the Administrative Oversight Committee, move approval of the Policy on Commission Contracts.

Motion by Spud Woodward. Motion passed unanimously.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive an update from the Executive Committee; review progress on the Draft Risk and Uncertainty Policy; consider the revised stock assessment schedule; and receive reports from the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) and Habitat Committee (HC).

The Commission Chair Pat Keliher presented the Executive Committee Report to the Board (see Executive Committee meeting summary earlier in this document).

Staff presented the Assessment Science Committee's recommended revisions to the stock assessment schedule, which were approved by the Board with one exception. The following changes were made: the benchmark assessments for Atlantic croaker, Atlantic sturgeon and spot were moved from 2022 to 2024, while the assessment update for river herring was moved from 2022 to 2023. Final approval for moving the date of the Atlantic sturgeon assessment is pending confirmation that the change will not affect Endangered Species Act status reviews. Jonah crab and the on-going horseshoe crab ARM revision were both added to 2023. The new schedule will be posted to the Commission's website on the Stock Assessments webpage (<http://www.asmfc.org/fisheries-science/stock-assessments>).

Jason McNamee presented a revised approach to the Commission's Draft Risk and Uncertainty Policy. The Board supported continued development of this approach, including working with the Management and Science Committee, Assessment Science Committee, and Committee on Economics and Social Sciences to refine the criteria for the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool. The Risk and Uncertainty Policy Work Group will also work with the Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee to revise the striped bass example.

Dr. Lisa Havel provided updates on ACFHP and HC. The ACFHP Steering Committee met and received updates on their current on-the-ground projects, the fish habitat conservation mapping project, and came to consensus on the 2020 Melissa Laser Fish Habitat Conservation Award recipient. The Committee also discussed outreach and communications initiatives and reviewed the 2020-2021 Action Plan. ACFHP recently received funding for multiple conservation projects along the coast. The FishAmerica Foundation is supporting a project in Florida Bay to restore sponge beds for gray snapper and spiny lobster. NOAA Recreational Fishing is supporting an oyster restoration project in the Lynnhaven River, Virginia. Finally, the USFWS-National Fish Habitat Action Plan FY2020 funding will support four projects this year: shoreline restoration on the Magothy River in Maryland; the County Line Dam removal in New Jersey; oyster reef restoration in Mosquito Lagoon, Florida; and Town Brook stream restoration in Massachusetts. ACFHP also endorsed one project recently: the Upper and Lower Kickemuit River Dam removal in Rhode Island.

HC met and received several updates. Michelle Bachman (NEFMC) and Jessica Coakley (MAFMC) reviewed the Northeast Regional Fish Habitat Assessment and Lisa Havel provided an ACFHP update. HC discussed the status and next steps for the following documents: Acoustic Impacts to Fisheries, Fish Habitats of Concern, and the 2020 Habitat Hotline Atlantic. There was also a discussion on clean water and ecological flows, as well as a discussion on the impacts of living shorelines on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) beds. The Policy Board was supportive of the HC's request to develop a draft policy on the impacts of living shoreline on SAV beds for review by the Board at a future meeting.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to review the 2020 Management Track Assessment, which was completed and peer-reviewed in June. The assessment is an update from the 2018 benchmark, and indicates the stock is overfished while overfishing is not occurring. While the traditional modeling framework (ASAP) is unchanged, the new assessment used different methods to produce biological reference points (BRPs) and short-term projections. The BRPs were estimated using only the selectivity from the U.S. mobile fleet because the proportion of catch from the fixed gear fleet has increased significantly in recent years. The fixed gear fleet, which is predominantly Canadian catch and not managed by catch quotas, harvests a higher proportion of younger fish than the mobile gear fishery, which influences the overall selectivity pattern and BRPs calculated using the method from the previous assessment. However, short-term projections include total harvest so that projected probabilities and stock status are informed by all stock removals. The assessment also indicates recruitment estimates are highly variable but have remained at low levels from 2013-2019, which introduces an additional source of uncertainty in short-term projections.

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) is scheduled to review the 2020 assessment results in September. The Council will set fishery specifications for 2021-2023 based on overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch recommendations provided by its Scientific and Statistical Committee. Accordingly, the Board is expected to consider specifications for the 2021-2023 seasons once a final rule has been published by NOAA Fisheries.

The Board also received an update on 2020 Area 1A fishery performance. The quota for Season 1 (June-September) in Area 1A is 2,152 metric tons, or 72.8% of the sub-annual catch limit (ACL) after adjusting for the research and fixed gear set asides, and the fact that the Area 1A fishery closes at 92% of the sub-ACL. Effort controls for Season 1 were established in May. Weekly landings have been low relative to previous years, with only about 872 metric tons landed since the fishery opened (July 19 in Maine, and July 20 in Massachusetts and New Hampshire). As a result, the Board moved the next Days Out meeting to August 14th when the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts will revisit fishery performance in Area 1A and consider changing effort controls for Season 1.

Lastly, the Board elected Megan Ware as Vice Chair. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to elect Megan Ware as Vice-chair to the Atlantic Herring Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion approved.

ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD & MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (AUGUST 6, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The Bluefish Management Board (Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to discuss draft alternatives for the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment and to consider the fishery management plan review and state compliance for the 2019 fishing year.

The Board and Council reviewed progress on the amendment and recommendations from the Plan Development Team/Fishery Management Action Team (PDT/FMAT). Consistent with the PDT/FMAT recommendation, the Board and Council removed trigger based sector allocation alternatives and the refereed transfer approach. The Board and Council also decided to remove recreational sector separation from the amendment. Board and Council members agreed that recreational sector separation could be considered more comprehensively in a multi-species action. The ongoing Recreational Reform Initiative will provide an opportunity for thorough consideration (see the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Meeting Summary for more details). Approaches retained for further consideration include fishery management plan goals and objectives, recreational/commercial allocations, commercial allocations to the states, commercial allocations to the states with minimum default allocations, regional commercial quotas, rebuilding plan, recreational/commercial sector transfers, sector specific management uncertainty, and *de minimis* provision to relieve states from having to adopt fishery regulations.

The Board and Council expect to approve a final range of alternatives during their December joint meeting, with a Draft Amendment expected to be considered for release for public comment by February 2021. Additional information regarding the amendment process and timeline can be found at the [bluefish amendment action page](#).

The Board also reviewed and approved the 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and state compliance report. All states' regulations were found to be consistent with the FMP and *de minimis* requests were granted to Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia's commercial fisheries. Consistent with the Plan Review Team recommendations, the Board tasked the Technical Committee (TC) with reviewing the effectiveness of the Addendum I sampling design and reevaluating the optimal geographic range and sample size for bluefish age data. Additionally, the TC was tasked with reviewing the increased importance of recreational discards in stock assessments. Generating reliable discard length data from recreational anglers could improve the robustness of stock assessments moving forward.

For more information, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to remove recreational for-hire sector separation from further development in the bluefish amendment. Further development of for-hire sector separations should be considered under comprehensive recreational reform initiatives.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes (14 in favor, 1 opposed).

Council: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion carries by consensus.

Move to approve PRT recommendations, the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan Review of the 2019 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests for Maine, South Carolina and Georgia's commercial fisheries.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion approved.

ASMFC SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD & MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (AUGUST 6, 2020)

Meeting Summary

The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to review and consider a public hearing document for Draft Addendum XXXIII and the Council's corresponding amendment on commercial black sea bass state allocations and to discuss next steps for the recreational reform initiative. The Board also considered a conservation equivalency proposal from Massachusetts.

Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment

The Board and Council reviewed draft management options included in Draft Addendum XXXIII and the Council's corresponding Amendment. The addendum and amendment will consider changes to the state allocations of the black sea bass commercial quota and potential changes to Federal management of commercial black sea bass fisheries. After considering the pros and cons of moving forward with this action concurrently with development of the joint recreational and commercial sector reallocation amendment, the Board and Council approved the document for public comment.

The Draft Addendum and Council hearing document includes a variety of management options for changes to the black sea bass commercial state allocations. These include status quo, increasing Connecticut's allocation to 5%, dynamic allocations partially based on regional stock distribution, a trigger-based approach, and distributing a percentage of coastwide quota using initial allocations and the remaining proportion differently. Options are also included to consider changes to federal management of commercial black sea bass, including adding state commercial allocations to the Council FMP, paybacks of state quota overages, and federal in-season closures.

A subsequent press release will announce the availability of Draft Addendum XXXIII and the Council's corresponding Amendment, as well as the public hearing schedule (expected to take place in fall 2020).

Recreational Reform Initiative

The Council and Board reviewed topics which may be addressed through the Recreational Reform Initiative. This initiative addresses recreational stability and flexibility for all four jointly managed recreational species, including summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. Staff provided information on what type of management action, if any, would be necessary to implement the ideas discussed. Most topics discussed could be addressed through an addendum/framework. However, some changes would likely be significant enough to require an amendment (e.g., private angler reporting, mandatory tournament reporting, and recreational sector separation).

It was noted that upcoming discussions on the ongoing recreational and commercial allocation amendment may produce additional topics to consider as part of this initiative. Therefore, the Board and Council agreed to postpone initiating an action for recreational issues until after their next joint meeting on August 11-12, 2020.

Consideration of Massachusetts Conservation Equivalency Proposal

The Board reviewed a conservation equivalency proposal from Massachusetts to adjust the 2020 for-hire black sea bass season to account for days closed to for-hire fishing at the beginning of the season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal included three options to add additional open days to

the state's for-hire season in Wave 5 (September and October), developed through different methods. Option A proposed adding an additional 53 days to the end of the season based on daily harvest rate comparisons between Waves 3 (May and June) and 5. Option B proposed adding an additional 13 days to the end of the season, using the Technical Committee (TC) recommended method of using average 2018-2019 Wave 4 (July and August) harvest rates as a proxy for Wave 5. Option C represented a middle-ground falling between Options A and B and proposing to add an additional 30 days to the for-hire season. After considering comments from the TC, Advisory Panel, and Law Enforcement Committee, the Board approved Option C to modify the Massachusetts for-hire season dates to May 25 through October 9. The Board recognized that some uncertainty in recreational harvest is inevitable, but was not concerned this change would cause significant overages of the 2020 recreational harvest limit.

For more information on summer flounder and scup management, contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at dleaning@asmfc.org, and contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org for more information on black sea bass management.

Motions

Main Motion

Move to approve Draft Addendum XXXIII and Council public hearing document, as presented today, for public comment.

Motion to Postpone

Move to postpone further action on the Commission's Black Sea Bass Addendum XXXIII and the Council's amendment public hearing document until the August 2021 meeting to allow progress on the commercial/recreational reallocation amendment.

Board: Motion made by Ms. Bolen and seconded by Mr. Fote. Motion fails for lack of majority (5 in favor, 5 opposed, 2 abstentions)

Council: Motion made by Ms. Bolen and seconded by Mr. DiLernia.

Main Motion

Move to approve Draft Addendum XXXIII and Council public hearing document, as presented today, for public comment.

Council: Motion made by Ms. Davidson and seconded by Ms. Nolan. Motion passes (9 in favor, 8 opposed).

Board: Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion passes (7 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstention).

Move to approve Option C in the Massachusetts conservation equivalency proposal to modify the black sea bass recreational for-hire season for the dates May 25-October 9.

Motion made by Mr. Kane and seconded by Dr. Davis. Motion carries (6 in favor - MA, RI, CT, DE, MD, PRFC; 4 opposed - NY, NJ, VA, NC; 2 abstentions - NOAA, USFWS).