

Director's Report

May 2025 Quarterly Business Meeting

Documents

Spotted Seatrout Cold Stun Update Memo

Rule Suspensions

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management
Council Meeting Summary Report

South Atlantic Fishery Management
Council Meeting Report

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission Meeting Summary



JOSH STEIN
Governor

D. REID WILSON
Secretary

KATHY B. RAWLS
Director

May 7, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Lucas Pensinger and Melinda Lambert
Spotted Seatrout Species Co-Leads

SUBJECT: January 2025 Cold Stun Update

Issue

The Division Director issued [Proclamation FF-11-2025](#) on January 22, 2025, to close the commercial and recreational spotted seatrout fishery in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters effective at 5:00 p.m. on January 24 extending to 11:59 p.m. on June 15, 2025 following a severe cold stun event.

Background

At their March 2025 Business Meeting, the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) voted to adopt Amendment 1 to the Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan. The cold stun management in Amendment 1 included extending the fishery closure in the event of a cold stun through June 30 (previously through June 15) and a cold stun adaptive management framework allowing for additional adjustments of bag or trip limits, size limits, season closures, or gill net yardage restrictions.

Discussion

The Division Director issued [Proclamation FF-15-2025](#) on January 22, 2025, to extend the commercial and recreational spotted seatrout fishery closure in Coastal and Joint Fishing Waters to 11:59 p.m. on June 30, 2025. The closure follows the Marine Fisheries Commission's (MFC) management strategy in [Amendment 1 to the Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan](#) which allows the Director to close the spotted seatrout fishery in the event of a significant cold stun.

Although the Division does not have a recommendation on any cold stun adaptive management measures at this time, Division staff will continue to analyze data from the January cold stun as well as other data sources such as independent sampling, length and age frequencies, and landings data to determine if further cold stun measures are warranted. Regardless of any additional cold stun measures recommended, Division staff will prepare a full cold stun report for the February 2026 MFC Business Meeting.



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April 17, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Jason Rock, Fisheries Management Section Chief

SUBJECT: Temporary Rule Suspensions

Issue

In accordance with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Resource Management Policy Number 2014-2, Temporary Rule Suspension, the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission will vote on any new rule suspensions that have occurred since the last meeting of the commission.

Findings

There have been no new rule suspensions since the March 2025 meeting.

Action Needed

No action is needed.

Overview

In accordance with policy, the division will report current rule suspensions previously approved by the commission as non-action items. They include:

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0103 (h) GILL NETS, SEINES, IDENTIFICATION, RESTRICTIONS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to implement year-round small mesh gill net attendance requirements in certain areas of the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse rivers systems. This action was taken as part of a department initiative to review existing small mesh gill net rules to limit yardage and address attendance requirements in certain areas of the state. This suspension continues in Proclamation [M-9-2025](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03J .0501 (e)(2) DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS FOR POUND NETS AND POUND NET SETS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to increase the minimum mesh size of escape panels for flounder pound nets in accordance with Amendment 3 of the North Carolina Southern Flounder Fishery



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Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in proclamation [M-34-2015](#) and continues in Proclamation [M-9-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0103 (a)(1) PROHIBITED NETS, MESH LENGTHS AND AREAS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust trawl net minimum mesh size requirements in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation SH-3-2019 and continues in Proclamation [SH-1-2022](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0105 (2) RECREATIONAL SHRIMP LIMITS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to modify the recreational possession limit of shrimp by removing the four quarts heads on and two and a half quarts heads off prohibition from waters closed to shrimping in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [SH-4-2022](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03L .0205 (a) CRAB SPAWNING SANCTUARIES

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to close crab spawning sanctuaries year-round to the use of trawls in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Shrimp Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [M-13-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0502 (a) MULLET

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to modify the recreational and for-hire possession limits of mullet in accordance with Amendment 2 to the North Carolina Striped Mullet Fishery Management Plan. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [FF-27-2024](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03M .0515 (a)(2) DOLPHIN

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust the recreational vessel limit to complement management of dolphin under the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [FF-30-2022](#).



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NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03O .0501 (e)(4) PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN PERMITS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to issue the Shellfish Relocation Permit to permittees already issued a Division of Coastal Management permit for development activity. This suspension was implemented in Proclamation [M-11-2023](#).

NCMFC Rule 15A NCAC 03Q .0107 (4) SPECIAL REGULATIONS: JOINT WATERS

Suspension of a portion of this rule for an indefinite period. Suspension of this rule allows the division to adjust the creel limit for American shad under the management framework of the North Carolina American Shad Sustainable Fishery Plan. This suspension was continued in Proclamation [FF-8-2025](#).

April 2025 Council Meeting Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met by webinar April 8-10, 2025. The following is a summary of actions taken and issues considered during the meeting. Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available on the Council's [April 2025 meeting page](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

During this meeting, the Council:

- Approved several changes to the to the recreational fisheries management programs for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish through the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda (joint action with the ASMFC's ISFMP Policy Board)
- Reviewed scoping comments received on the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment and agreed to address the issues of sector separation and data collection separately (joint action with the ASMFC's ISFMP Policy Board)
- Reviewed the 2025 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report and the 2025 EAFM risk assessment summary report
- Completed a required 5-year review of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions for all fishery management plans
- Received an update on development of the Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment
- Presented the Ricks E Savage Award to Captain Adam Nowalsky
- Presented the James A. Ruhle Cooperative Research Award to Mr. Jack Casey

Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) approved modifications to the process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits), as well as the recreational accountability measures, for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The Council recommended these changes through a framework action, and the Policy Board adopted these changes through Addendum XXXVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Addendum III to the Bluefish FMP. These changes are part of a broader long-term effort by both the Council and Commission to improve recreational management of these jointly managed species.

The current process for setting recreational measures, referred to as the Percent Change Approach, was implemented in 2023 and will sunset at the end of 2025. During a joint meeting last week in Galloway, New Jersey, the Council and Policy Board discussed several options to improve or replace the Percent Change Approach for 2026 and beyond. After reviewing public comments and recommendations from technical committees and advisory panels, the Council and Policy Board agreed to maintain the current process with several modifications based on lessons learned over the past few years. These changes will be implemented in two phases.

The first phase of changes aims to better account for stock status when setting measures and will create more opportunities for stability in management measures. The current system uses three biomass categories to guide whether measures should change; the revised approach adds a fourth category for stocks near their biomass target and establishes a separate process for overfished stocks. These changes will take effect starting with the

2026 recreational measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Council and Policy Board delayed the implementation of these changes for bluefish until 2028 to allow time for development of an appropriate methodology for evaluating the impacts of measures on bluefish harvest and discards. The bluefish stock has been under a rebuilding plan since 2022, and recreational measures will continue to be set based on the rebuilding plan until the stock is declared rebuilt.

The second phase of modifications, which will be implemented for setting 2030 recreational measures and beyond, will update the process to use a catch-based target. Unlike the current process – which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest – a catch-based approach aims to achieve a target level of total dead catch, including both harvest and dead discards. This approach will allow for more explicit consideration of how measures affect discards. Some advisors and members of the public raised concerns about the potential for this change to create greater instability in management measures. After extensive discussion of each approach, the Council and Policy Board delayed the transition to a catch-based target until 2030 to allow time for additional analysis on the potential impacts to measures.

The Council and Policy Board also approved changes to the recreational accountability measures. These changes will be effective starting in 2026 for all four species. Under these revisions, when an accountability measure is triggered due to recent overages of the recreational annual catch limits, managers will also consider if those overages contributed to overfishing when determining the appropriate response.

The Council will submit the framework to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and implementation, while the Commission's measures are final for state waters. Additional information about this action is available on the [Council](#) and [Commission](#) action pages.

Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

The Council and Policy Board reviewed scoping comments on the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment from public hearings and written comments, as well as input provided by the joint Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Advisory Panels and the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team. Based on these comments, the Council and Policy Board agreed that recreational sector separation and recreational data collection should be addressed separately. Further development of the amendment will focus on management options for recreational sector separation, including mode management, as well as consideration of for-hire permitting and reporting requirements.

The Council and Policy Board separated out the recreational data collection and use issue from the amendment due to concerns that the complexity of this issue would cause significant delays in the amendment timeline. Council and Policy Board members also noted there is a need to more clearly define the objectives for recreational data collection improvement. This issue will be explored through a white paper which will consider the feasibility of various approaches and help the Council and Policy Board clarify goals for a potential future action. Additional information and updates are available on the [Council](#) and [Commission](#) action pages.

Ecosystem Updates

Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report

Dr. Sarah Gaichas presented key findings from the 2025 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystem Report (SOE). This report has been provided annually to the Council since 2017 and gives information on the status and trends of relevant ecological, environmental, economic, and social components of the Mid-Atlantic Bight ecosystem. The report evaluates the performance of different ecosystem indicators relative to management objectives and the potential climate and ecosystem risks to meeting those management objectives. Highlights from the 2025 report include:

- The Council continues to meet many of its species/stock specific management objectives and most stocks are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.
- Many ecosystem level management objectives are concerning as seafood production continues to decline, commercial revenue is at historic lows, and the majority of commercial and recreational fishing communities rely on highly climate vulnerable stocks.
- The distribution, timing of migration and spawning, and stock productivity for many Mid-Atlantic stocks have changed as ocean conditions continue to change and increase in variability.
- Globally, 2024 was the warmest year on record but ocean temperatures in the Mid-Atlantic and New England were near normal and new ocean climate models suggest a pause in ocean warming for the next 6-7 years.

The public now has the opportunity to contribute to future SOE reports by sharing their observations from out on the water. Information such as record high or low observations, observations that may be different from recent conditions, events that might be affecting fishery operations, or really unique or newsworthy events. Observations can be submitted to northeast.ecosystem.highlights@noaa.gov.

Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) Risk Assessment

The Council reviewed the 2025 EAFM risk assessment summary report. The risk assessment report is updated each spring to provide the Council with a snapshot of the current risks to meeting its management objectives and helps the Council decide where to focus limited resources to address priority ecosystem considerations in its science and management programs. The risk assessment includes 28 risk elements that span biological, ecological, social, economic, and management issues. The updated report includes indicators from the 2025 State of the Ecosystem report and new analyses by NEFSC and Council staff for certain Ecological and Management elements to address feedback from the Council's Ecosystem and Ocean Planning (EOP) Committee and Advisory Panel. Nearly 73% of all risk rankings evaluated in the assessment were considered low or low-moderate risk; while risks associated with distribution shifts, regulatory complexity, discards, and many ecosystem level elements were considered moderate-high or high risk. After reviewing the risk assessment findings, the Council supported further evaluation and analyses to understand the factors driving the higher risks associated with commercial value and commercial fleet diversity.

Essential Fish Habitat 5-Year Review

At this meeting, the Council completed its Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) 5-year Review. This review has been ongoing since 2023 and summarized new and updated information on the 9 required EFH components in the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for all the Council's managed species. This review work was collaboratively conducted by the Council's EFH Fishery Management Action Team and the New England Fishery Management Council's Habitat Plan Development Team. The Council approved the EFH Review Summary Report, including its findings and recommendations, and supporting technical component reports. These reports and products will be posted on the Council's website, and a letter will be sent to NMFS transmitting the reports. The Council has already initiated an Omnibus ("all species and FMPs") EFH Amendment. Work on this Amendment to modify the FMPs based on this updated EFH information will begin, with final action expected in early 2026. With the review completed in 2025, the next EFH 5-year review would be scheduled for completion in 2030.

Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework

The Council received information on the development of the Joint Mid-Atlantic and New England Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment. This action considers providing alternative surface-marking provisions for fixed-gear fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region to allow the use of fixed gear without a persistent buoy line and reconcile fishery management plan regulations with recent and potential future changes to Marine Mammal Protection Act regulations. The Council initiated this action and discussed various

considerations for allowing the use of on-demand gear. The Regional Administrator clarified that while the Joint Framework Adjustment would create the option to use alternative gear-marking, on-demand gear could not be used unless approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Emphasis was placed on the need for alternative gear-marking technology that would be the functional equivalent of a buoy (i.e., providing vessels with information on where fixed gear is located). Additional information and updates on this action can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/gear-marking-framework>.

Council Awards

Ricks E Savage Award

The Council recognized Captain Adam Nowalsky as the recipient of the 2024 Ricks E Savage award. The award is given annually to an individual who has made exceptional contributions to the management and conservation of fishery resources in the mid-Atlantic region.

Nowalsky was appointed to the Council in 2015 and served with distinction for nine years before terming out in 2024. During his tenure, he was one of the Council's most engaged and influential voices, known for his willingness to dive into complex management issues. "Adam's ability to see all sides, to think creatively, and to contribute constructively made him a trusted colleague and a valuable contributor," said Wes Townsend, Council Chair. "He consistently raised the bar for everyone involved in the Council process."

During his time on the Council, Nowalsky was particularly engaged in recreational fisheries management issues. With more than two decades of experience fishing South Jersey waters as a licensed charter operator, he brought practical knowledge and an understanding of anglers' concerns to the Council's decision-making process. Notably, he was a driving force behind the Recreational Reform Initiative, a joint effort launched in 2019 by the Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) which aims to improve management of recreational fisheries for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish.

From 2016 to 2021, Nowalsky chaired the Council's Research Steering Committee, leading efforts to navigate complex decisions about the future of the Research Set-Aside program. His leadership extended beyond the Council as well, serving as New Jersey's Legislative Proxy to the ASMFC since 2010, where he has chaired numerous boards. He also played a central role in bringing the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) to the Mid-Atlantic region and continues to serve on the MREP Steering Committee.

"Adam's legacy is one of dedication, integrity, and collaboration," said Townsend. "His contributions have left a lasting mark on the Council and the broader Mid-Atlantic fisheries community."



James A. Ruhle Cooperative Research Award

The Council presented the James A. Ruhle Cooperative Research Award to Mr. Jack Casey, in recognition of his pioneering work in cooperative fisheries research and his decades-long contributions to the scientific understanding of shark species along the East Coast. The award is named in memory of Captain Jimmy Ruhle – a commercial fisherman, former Council member, and trailblazer in cooperative fisheries research. The award celebrates individuals or groups who have made exceptional contributions to cooperative research in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Jack Casey's legacy is one of innovation, leadership, and collaboration. A U.S. Navy veteran who began his fisheries career in 1960 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Casey quickly recognized the untapped potential of working directly with fishermen to advance scientific understanding. In 1962, he launched the Cooperative Shark Tagging Program with fewer than 100 volunteer fishermen. Under his leadership, the program expanded into one of the most successful and enduring partnerships between the scientific and fishing communities, resulting in hundreds of thousands of sharks tagged and an unparalleled body of data on shark movements, behavior, and biology. His efforts helped transform the public's perception of sharks and laid the groundwork for significant advancements in shark science. In addition to founding the tagging program, Casey played a leading role in establishing NOAA's marine fisheries laboratory in Narragansett, Rhode Island, where the Apex Predators Program continues his legacy of collaboration and innovation.

"This award is a fitting tribute to a man whose work helped define what cooperative research can achieve," said Council Chair Wes Townsend. "Jack inspired generations of scientists, many of whom continue to carry forward his commitment to collaboration and innovation."

Upcoming Meetings

The next Council meeting will be held **June 3-5, 2025**, in Virginia Beach, VA. A complete list of upcoming meetings can be found at <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events>.



Jack Casey (left) with Council Chair Wes Townsend



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 13, 2025

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Council Addresses Broad Range of Federal Fisheries Issues During March Meeting

Mackerel port meetings; commercial snapper grouper fishery; budget cuts top agenda

Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council began their week-long meeting in Jekyll Island, GA with a focused look at issues facing the federal commercial snapper grouper fishery and continued to discuss several federal fishery issues throughout the week. The impacts of recent reductions in workforce at NOAA Fisheries were acknowledged as the Council considers future management measures for species such as Black Sea Bass, Golden Tilefish, Atlantic King, and Spanish Mackerels.

Mackerel Port Meetings

A series of 16 in-person and six virtual port meetings were held along the Atlantic coast in 2024-25, focusing on the Atlantic King and Spanish Mackerel fisheries. The port meetings, held at the request of the Council's Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, provided an opportunity for meeting attendees to discuss their perspectives with other fishery participants and local Council members. Council staff reviewed the comprehensive draft report from the port meetings and provided options for moving forward with the development of management actions.

The [overview of the draft report](#) divides the seven goals and objectives of the port meetings into three categories: 1) environmental conditions affecting the fisheries, for example, when and where the fish are available to fishermen; 2) any needed management changes; and 3) fishing dynamics. The report describes the fisheries by region and individual South Atlantic states, providing insight into the similarities and differences in these economically important fisheries. A total of 263 stakeholders, including private recreational, for-hire, and commercial fishermen participated in the meetings. "The idea of stakeholder meetings is something that was initiated by the advisory panel and has been a huge undertaking," explained Tom Roller, Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee and Council representative from North Carolina. "Thank you to all of the fishermen that participated and kudos to the staff, states, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and other councils for their assistance in making this effort a success."

Before determining how to move forward with management actions, the Council will consider input from its Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel during the June 2025 Council meeting in Port Canaveral, Florida. The Council will also receive information from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council on its coastal migratory pelagics stakeholder engagement efforts.

(Continued)

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Full Council and Committee
SUMMARY MOTIONS
March 3-7, 2025

This is a summary of the motions approved by the Council. Motions addressing actions and alternatives for FMP amendments are followed by text showing the result of the approved motion. Complete details on motions and other committee recommendations are provided in the Committee Reports available on the SAFMC website.

Full Council Session I (CLOSED)

MOTION 1: Appoint the following individuals:

- **Shrimp Advisory Panel Liaisons**
Appoint Sonny Gwin (MD) and Pat Geer (VA) as liaisons to the Shrimp Advisory Panel.
- **Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel**
Appoint Sean Wilms with FWC's Florida Wildlife Research Institute to the advisory panel.
- **SEDAR 90 (South Atlantic Red Snapper) Appointments**
Appoint the following persons to the SEDAR 90 Data Workshop: Anna-Mai Christmas-Svajdlenka, Julie Simpson, Julie Dingle, and Paul McLaughlin.

MOTION 2: Remove representatives from other fishery management councils from SAFMC committees and create a liaison position for the Dolphin Wahoo Committee for the New England Fishery Management Council (non-voting), effective with the June 2025 Council meeting.

Full Council Session I

MOTION 3: Approve the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment for scoping.

MOTION 4: Direct staff to do the following:

- Prepare a letter to support restoring the Beaufort, North Carolina, facility.
- Conduct scoping for the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment prior to the June 2025 meeting.
- Provide comments on the draft MOA with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to Sanctuary staff.

Habitat and Shrimp Committees

Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12

MOTION 5: Move forward with Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.

- Alternative 1: No Action
- Alternative 2: Establish a SFAA with the area of 22 sq miles along the eastern edge of the northern OHAPC boundary
- Alternative 3: Establish a SFAA with the area of 32 sq miles along the eastern edge of the northern OHAPC boundary

MOTION 6: Adopt the following timing and tasks:

- Continue the development of Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12 and prepare a draft to consider approval for public hearings at the June 2025 meeting.

Habitat and Ecosystem

MOTION 7: Approve the EFH 5-year review letter as written for submission.

MOTION 8: Move that the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel recommended definition of living shorelines be adopted for use by the SAFMC:

A living shoreline is a coastal management approach that stabilizes and protects the shoreline using a suite of options that promote the use of natural materials, such as native plants, sand, rocks, and oyster shells. The details of material usage and percentage of material type are determined by state management bodies.

Unlike traditional hard structures such as seawalls, living shorelines should maintain the natural connections between upland, intertidal, and aquatic environments.

This approach not only minimizes erosion and aims to reduce wave energy but also provides valuable wildlife habitat, maintains or improves water quality, and supports ecological resilience.

Living shorelines should be designed to spontaneously grow and adapt over time, making them a dynamic, nature-based solution for coastal protection and management.

MOTION 9: Approve the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel agenda items listed for the July 2025 meeting:

- Review progress on the habitat website.
- Review progress on the habitat program communication strategy
- Essential Fish Habitat Consultations.
- Review of beneficial use projects and discussion on future impacts
- Revision of Alterations to Riverine, Estuarine and Nearshore Flows policy to address impacts from freshwater discharges and impediments to river flow.
- Space program impacts on habitat (if the information is available).
- Projects with Potential Habitat Impacts:
 - Central Virginia Offshore Wind (CVOW) update from Dominion Energy on habitat created by wind farms and fish mortality during construction.
 - Sea Optic fiber cables.
- Climate readiness projects overview and EFH project update.
- Climate and Ecosystem Fisheries Initiative (CEFI) Overview?
- Identify higher abundance locations and additional life stage information for EFH clarification in each fishery management plan (improving EFH tier structure).
- Integrate food web information from food web policy into EFH definitions.
- Work plan update.

MOTION 10: Direct staff to do the following:

- Request that the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel discuss the goals and objectives for an Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the South Atlantic region and bring those

- back to the Council for consideration at the September Council meeting.
- Submit the EFH letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Mackerel Cobia Committee

MOTION 11: Adopt the following timing and tasks:

- Request Gulf Council staff provide a presentation to the Council on their coastal migratory pelagic stakeholder engagement efforts at the June 2025 meeting.
- Provide a summary of information provided during port meetings on each identified management topic at the June 2025 meeting.
- Provide a refresher on Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch level recommendations from the SSC based on SEDAR 78 at the June 2025 meeting.
- Convene a meeting of the mackerel cobia advisory panel in spring 2025.

Snapper Grouper Committee

MOTION 12: Initiate an amendment that will address commercial permit and trip efficiency issues.

MOTION 13: Initiate an amendment to consider options for snapper grouper aggregate recreational bag limits and other management actions to reduce recreational dead discards. (this could be included in another amendment already on the workplan).

MOTION 14: Direct staff to do the following:

- Update the Shiny tool to evaluate the need for conservation and management of snapper grouper species.
- Prepare golden tilefish amendment as an abbreviated framework to adjust golden tilefish catch levels only that would be approved at the June or September Council meeting.
- Request additional information on MSY proxies from Florida FWRI and the SEFSC.
- Draft and submit the Council's comment letter on Amendment 59 (secretarial amendment) and submit by the March 17 deadline.
- Develop draft actions and alternatives for Amendment 56, including the action to consider aligning the start date of the golden tilefish recreational season with that of other deepwater species.
- Conduct the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting with approved agenda items.
- Plan and conduct the Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-Committee's June 2025 meeting.
- Continue work on Amendment 46. Prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings in June 2025.
- Begin development of the commercial amendment as soon as the abbreviated golden tilefish amendment is complete.

For-Hire Reporting Amendment

The Council received input from its For-Hire Reporting and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels on potential actions to improve for-hire reporting in the South Atlantic region. An amendment is under development with actions to address reporting frequency, trip declaration requirements, approved landing locations, collection of economic data, and a mandatory validation survey. Scoping on the amendment will be held prior to the Council's June 2025 meeting.

Commercial Snapper Grouper Fishery

After reviewing input from its Snapper Grouper Commercial Sub-committee, the Council expressed an intent to develop an amendment addressing Snapper Grouper federal commercial permits and trip efficiency issues. Permit issues to consider may include revising the current 2 for 1 permit requirements, permit transfers, leasing of permitted vessels, limits for the number of permits that can be owned by an entity, and income requirements for "use it or lose" it provisions. Options to increase trip efficiencies may include an allowance for incidental catch and trip limit increases if landings are below a threshold by a specified date in the season. The Sub-Committee will meet again prior to the Council's June meeting and continue discussion of commercial fishery issues.

Private Recreational Permit and Education Requirements

The Council continued discussion of Amendment 46 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan that would establish a federal private recreational permit in the Snapper Grouper Fishery. The permit system would help identify the universe of private anglers or vessels targeting those species and enhance the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data. The amendment also includes an education component associated with the permit to promote the use of best fishing practices. Public hearings on the amendment will be scheduled for later in 2025.

Red Snapper

After receiving a presentation from NOAA Fisheries on measures proposed in Secretarial Amendment 59 to end overfishing of Red Snapper and reduce dead discards, the Council discussed the proposed actions and will provide feedback and recommendations to NOAA Fisheries by March 17, 2025.

Additional Information

Additional information about the Council's March 2025 meeting, including individual committee reports and reports from meetings of the Full Council, is now available from the Council's website:

<https://safmc.net/events/march-2025-council-meeting/> The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for June 9-13, 2025, in Cape Canaveral, Florida..

An online copy of this news release is available from the Council's website: <https://safmc.net/posts/council-addresses-broad-range-of-federal-fisheries-issues-during-march-meeting/>.

<p>The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.</p>
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Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 2025 Spring Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 2025 Spring Meeting
May 5-8, 2025

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

Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2025)

Press Release

American Lobster Board Approves Addendum XXXII to Repeal Addendum XXVII Gauge and Escape Vent Measures

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXXII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum repeals all gauge and escape vent size measures from Addendum XXVII. Measures related to the v-notch possession definition and the issuance of trap tags are maintained.

In October 2023, under Addendum XXVII a series of changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1 (Gulf of Maine), 3 (federal waters), and Outer Cape Cod was triggered based on observed declines in recruit abundance indices. The Board postponed the implementation of Addendum XXVII to January 1, 2025 to allow the Gulf of Maine states the opportunity to coordinate with Canada regarding possible trade implications and give the industry and gauge makers additional time to prepare for these changes. In October 2024, the Board further delayed implementation of the gauge and vent size measures, and v-notch possession definition of Addendum XXVII to July 1, 2025.

Addendum XXXII responds to industry concerns about the potential economic impacts of an increase to the minimum gauge size in the Gulf of Maine. By repealing the gauge and vent size measures, the Gulf of Maine states will have the opportunity to engage with the lobster industry, including the Area 1 Lobster Conservation Management Area Team, to identify alternative conservation measures to protect the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock. Maine and New Hampshire reported to the Board that they have already begun convening stakeholder meetings to discuss the state of the fishery and potential management approaches.

Addendum XXXII will be available on the Commission website, asmfc.org, on the American lobster webpage by next week. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR25-10

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Addendum XXXII, the Board received updates from Maine and New Hampshire on recent meetings with the Gulf of Maine lobster industry, a report from the Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) for Area 3, an update from NOAA Fisheries on the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Alternative Gear Marking Amendment, and an update on the ongoing benchmark stock assessment for lobster.

As requested by the Board, Maine and New Hampshire reported out on their meetings with the lobster industry on potential management approaches for the Gulf of Maine. Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has held one round of meetings with its Lobster Advisory Council and seven Zone Councils. Maine DMR is planning to hold an additional round of meetings and is considering conducting an industry survey to better understand perceptions of the fishery and the resource. New Hampshire has

planned meetings with commercial industry associations in the near term to begin discussing alternative management options.

The Board received an update on the development of a Joint Framework Adjustment initiated by the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils that would provide alternative surface-marking provisions for fixed-gear fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region. This is being considered to allow the use of fixed gear without a persistent buoy line such as on-demand trap gear, which has been identified as a possible approach for reducing entanglement risk for large whales. The Board noted input from the states' lobster industries should be considered before the action is finalized to ensure compatible gear-marking regulations in state and federal waters. Final action is planned for later this year.

The Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) Chair updated the Board on progress on the benchmark stock assessment for lobster. The final assessment workshop was held in February and the SAS has continued to meet via webinar to finalize data and complete base model runs and preliminary projections. The Peer Review Workshop is planned for late August or early September, and the Board will consider the Assessment and Peer Review Reports in October.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Postponed Main Motion from Winter Meeting

Move to add an item to option B in the addendum that says that Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts will provide for the Board by the Winter 2026 Meeting consensus positions to be the basis of future addendum actions affecting the biological productivity of the GOM lobster fishery.
Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Kaelin. Motion fails.

Postponed Substitute Motion from Winter Meeting

Move to substitute with "Move to add an item to option B in the draft addendum that says that Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts will provide for the Board by the Winter 2026 meeting state consensus positions."
Motion made by Mr. Borden and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion fails.

Move to adopt Option B "Repeal Addendum XXVII Gauge and Vent Size Measures" and approve Addendum XXXII, effective June 30, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion carries (Roll Call: In favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NJ, DE, MD, VA; Abstentions – NY, NOAA Fisheries; 9 in favor and 2 abstentions).

SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board met to consider Technical Addendum I to Addendum VII for approval. Addendum VII prohibits overnight soaks for state spiny dogfish permit holders using gillnets of certain mesh sizes in specific times and areas off Maryland and Virginia. The Board approved Technical Addendum I to Addendum VII, which corrects a typo in the longitude of one point in the Delaware and Maryland Bycatch Reduction Area and clarifies the mesh range is "equal to or greater than 5.25 inches (13.3 cm) and less than 10 inches (25.4 cm)" rather than "between 5.25 and 10 inches (13.34 to 25.4

cm).” This change is consistent with the federal action in Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6 and the intent of Addendum VII as approved by the Board. The Technical Addendum will become effective immediately.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at jboyle@asmfc.org.

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Motions

Move to approve Technical Addendum I to Addendum VII, effective immediately.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to consider revising specifications for the 2025-2027 fishing years.

In October 2024, the Board adopted the 2025-2027 specifications package for Atlantic herring as recommended by the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) based on the 2024 Atlantic herring stock assessment and the biomass-based control rule. NOAA Fisheries implemented the 2025 specifications via in-season adjustment in December 2024. In January 2025, NEFMC requested its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) provide updated specification recommendations based on available 2024 catch information. Updated projections were compiled to account for 2024 preliminary catch data indicating 51% of the annual catch limit (ACL) was caught (instead of the 100% assumed in the assessment projections), and account for the 1,000 metric ton transfer to the Area 1A sub-ACL in late 2024. In April 2025, the SSC recommended revising the specifications based on the updated projections since they use the most recent available catch information and remain consistent with the control rule and stock rebuilding timeline. The updated specifications recommended by NEFMC increased the 2025 ACL by 1,846 metric tons. NEFMC voted to increase the 2025-2026 specifications per the SSC recommendation but held 2027 constant at 2026 levels as a precautionary measure given the poor stock status and the upcoming 2026 stock assessment to inform 2027-2029 specifications.

The Board voted to adopt the updated specifications as recommended by NEFMC. NEFMC will submit the recommended 2025-2027 specifications to NOAA Fisheries, and implementation by NOAA Fisheries is anticipated during Summer 2025.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to adopt the following revised specifications for the 2025-2027 fishing years for Atlantic herring as recommended by the New England Fishery Management Council, contingent on the final rule being published by NOAA Fisheries:

For 2025

- Annual Catch Limit (ACL) / Domestic Annual Harvest = 4,556 mt
- Area 1A Sub-ACL = 1,317 mt
- Area 1B Sub-ACL = 196 mt
- Area 2 Sub-ACL = 1,267 mt
- Area 3 Sub-ACL = 1,777 mt

For 2026 and 2027

- Annual Catch Limit (ACL) / Domestic Annual Harvest = 9,134 mt
- Area 1A Sub-ACL = 2,640 mt
- Area 1B Sub-ACL = 393 mt
- Area 2 Sub-ACL = 2,539 mt
- Area 3 Sub-ACL = 3,562 mt

For all three years

- Border Transfer = 0 mt each year
- Fixed Gear Set-Aside = 30 mt each year
- Research Set-Aside as a Percentage of Sub-ACLs = 0% each year

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (MAY 6 & 8, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to review the *Conservation Equivalency Policy: Technical and Guidance Document*; receive a progress report on the weakfish stock assessment; and receive reports from the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee Summary) and Law Enforcement Committee (see LEC meeting summary).

In October 2023, the Policy Board approved revisions to the *Conservation Equivalency: Policy and Technical Guidance Document* to reflect the current application of conservation equivalency in Commission interstate fishery management plans and provide new guidance on the use of conservation equivalency, including stock status. Staff requested clarification and guidance on some of the new directives in the document in order to carry out the guidance consistently across FMPs. The Policy Board discussed and agreed to include a process to review conservation equivalency after each stock assessment though it does not require species management boards to consider allowing conservation equivalency following a stock assessment. The Board will determine how to treat existing conservation equivalency programs when conservation equivalency is no longer allowed in the FMP. Staff will incorporate these changes and additional suggestions and bring the document back to the Policy Board for further review in August.

Staff provided the Policy Board an update on the progress of the Weakfish Stock Assessment Update. The assessment was delayed further due to the need to update the model code to work with a newer version of the software. The assessment will be presented to the Weakfish Board at the August meeting with data through 2023.

Under other business, the Board was made aware of a motion from the IUCN that would recommend CITES parties consider the transfer of the scalloped hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*) and its look-a-like species, the smooth hammerhead shark (*S. zygaena*) and the great hammerhead shark (*S. mokarran*) from Appendix II to Appendix I recommended listing. An Appendix I listing would make exports of these sharks extremely restricted. States will provide staff with information on hammerhead landings and exports if available in order to provide comments to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, who is reviewing the IUCN's motion.

Also under other business, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reported it has enacted regulations for the Atlantic bonito and false albacore recreational fisheries in response to the growing popularity of fishing for these species and the potential for them to be overfished. The Commonwealth had reports of increased catch of both species over the past few years, with a dramatic increase in 2024. The regulations include a minimum size limit of 16 inches (fork length) and a combined bag limit of five fish per person for both species. These rules apply to both recreational and commercial fishing, with some exceptions for commercial weir operators and mechanized mackerel jig fishers.

Lastly, a Board member raised concern that Recreational Fishing and Boating Foundation funds remain in jeopardy. Funding for the current fiscal year has not been released by the Department of the Interior. While these funds are available to the Commission, they are critical to state budgets for recreational fishing and boating activities. It was suggested states may want to reach out to their Congressional delegations to raise the importance of these funds to the states' work.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org

Motions

Move to change “will” to “may” in the last paragraph of page 2, and for stock status conditions on page 3 (first “will”).

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion passes (8 in favor, 7 opposed).

SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 6, 2025)

Press Release

Sciaenids Board Initiates Draft Addendum II to Address Red Drum Stock and Management Concerns

Arlington, VA – The Commission's Sciaenids Management Board initiated Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum. The Draft Addendum will consider a number of changes to the management programs for the southern (South Carolina to Florida) and northern (New Jersey to North Carolina) stocks of red drum in response to the findings of the [2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report](#).

The Draft Addendum will consider modifying Amendment 2 reference points for the southern stock as well as the process to set management measures to achieve the reference points. The recent assessment found the red drum southern stock to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. These proposed modifications to Amendment 2 will allow the southern stock states to propose

changes to their current red drum management measures to achieve the new reference points. Although the northern stock is not overfished, nor experiencing overfishing, the Board expressed concern with an increasing trend in fishing mortality observed in the northern stock. As a result, the Draft Addendum will propose changes to the states' recreational bag limits and slot limits for the northern stock, as well as provide the northern stock states the opportunity to align their differing regulations, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Board will consider approval of Draft Addendum II for public comment in August, with public hearings held in the late summer/early fall.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org or 703.842.0723.

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PR25-12

Meeting Summary

In addition to initiating a Draft Addendum to consider changes to the management programs for the northern and southern stocks of red drum (see above press release), the Sciaenids Management Board reviewed a report from the Red Drum Technical Committee (TC) on action items tasked by the Board at its October 2024 and February 2025 meetings and received a progress update on the Atlantic croaker and spot stock assessments.

The Board received a report from the TC which described its methodology to estimate catch reductions from regulation changes for both the southern and northern stocks, the catch reductions needed for the southern stock (Florida – South Carolina) to fish at lower levels of fishing mortality, and the TC's interpretation of the traffic light analysis result of "Moderate Action," especially as it relates to the northern stock (North Carolina – New Jersey). Results and recommendations from the TC in this report can be found in the May 2025 [Meeting Materials for the Sciaenids Management Board](#).

The Board also received a progress update on the Atlantic croaker and spot benchmark stock assessments, including updated timelines for both assessments. The Atlantic Croaker and Spot Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met in October 2024 to discuss different regional trends observed along the Atlantic coast and made a recommendation to change the structure of the assessment from one coastwide model to two regional models. The border between regions will be Cape Lookout, North Carolina. The SAS will continue development of the Atlantic croaker assessment, with an assessment workshop planned for October 2025 and peer review workshop planned for April 2026. Work on the spot benchmark stock assessment is not planned to resume until May 2026.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

Motions

For the southern stock of red drum, initiate an addendum to modify the FMP to set the management threshold at F30 and the management goal at F40. Require all states to set regulations that would be expected to not exceed F30 for fishing mortality in their state. Direct staff to conduct a new stock assessment for red drum with a terminal year of 2031. When evaluating state regulations' ability to not exceed F30, the Technical Committee shall not consider non-compliance. In the case where states have changed their regulations after the terminal year for F in the 2024 stock assessment, the Technical Committee shall use actual recreational harvest estimates to evaluate F.

Motion made by Dr. Belcher and seconded by Ms. Burgess. Motion passes (8 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention).

Initiate an addendum to consider changes to the recreational bag limits and slot limits for the northern stock of red drum to address increasing fishing mortality and to update *de minimis* provisions of the FMP.

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion carries (7 in favor, 3 abstentions).

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 6, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to consider the terms of reference and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) nominations for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment; receive a Technical Committee Report on stock projections to inform Draft Addendum III; and review the management options developed for Draft Addendum III and consider approving the draft addendum for public comment.

Work on the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment has begun and is scheduled to be peer-reviewed in March 2027 and presented to the Board in May or August 2027, depending on when the peer review report becomes available. The Technical Committee (TC) developed draft terms of reference for the Board's consideration largely based on the terms of reference from the 2019 benchmark stock assessment with some modifications and new additions. The Board approved the terms of reference as recommended by the TC.

The SAS is populated prior to each benchmark assessment. Several state and federal scientists along with Commission staff were presented to the Board as SAS nominees. The Board approved the SAS nominations as presented.

The Board received a TC-SAS report on stock projections and associated reductions for 2026 to inform Draft Addendum III. Draft Addendum III was initiated in December 2024 to consider changing management measures in 2026 to support stock rebuilding. Stock projections were updated to include the preliminary 2024 estimate of fishery removals. The projections carried forward the TC-SAS assumptions of an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 followed by a decrease in fishing mortality in 2026 and onward as the above-average 2018 year-class moves through the ocean slot limit. The base projection scenario (i.e., status quo management) indicates a 49% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029 with a 1% reduction in 2026 needed to achieve a 50% probability of

rebuilding. To achieve a 60% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029, a 7% reduction in 2026 is needed. The TC-SAS emphasized that the outcome of management changes designed to achieve reductions of less than 10% would be difficult to measure given the uncertainty in the MRIP estimates. Total removals are not known within 10%, so a reduction of less than 10% would not be statistically distinguishable from no reduction at all (i.e., status quo measures), and there is a high degree of uncertainty in whether measures that accomplish that small of a reduction on paper would be effective in practice.

The TC-SAS report also included sensitivity runs extending the projections beyond 2029 and considering a very low recruitment assumption for future years based on the recent six years of very low recruitment. Under the very low recruitment assumption, spawning stock biomass will start to decline after 2029 as compared to increasing under the base recruitment scenario, even under the low fishing mortality rate projected for 2024. The Board requested that a summary of the very low recruitment sensitivity runs be added to the draft addendum.

The Board reviewed and discussed the proposed management options in Draft Addendum III covering three issues: reduction in fishery removals to support rebuilding; commercial tagging at point of harvest vs. point of sale (added by the Board in February 2025); measuring total length of striped bass (added by the Board in February 2025). After lengthy discussion on whether to move forward with considering a reduction in fishery removals for 2026, the Board voted to keep options for a 2026 reduction in the draft addendum. The Board shortened the list of possible recreational options to achieve the reduction by removing some recreational mode split options and removing the ocean size limit options. The Board also removed the option for a 0.8% commercial quota reduction since it was similar to the 0% commercial quota reduction option. The Board requested an additional option be added for New England seasonal closures considering a dual closure in Wave 3 and Wave 5. The Board also agreed that seasonal closure options must be a minimum of 14-days in duration with the exception of closures added to existing closures. The Board also requested adding text to explain the complexities with potential closures in North Carolina (due to limited fish availability) and potential closures in New York during Wave 2 or Wave 6 (due to existing New York season closures).

The Board also considered adding a fourth issue to the Draft Addendum considering Maryland's recreational season baseline. The Board agreed to add Maryland's proposed option for a new season baseline to the Draft Addendum contingent on upon a review by the TC-SAS. The Board requested the TC-SAS discuss the modifications to Maryland's methodology, the assumption of constant effort when opening a current closure, and any biological impacts that should be considered from the proposed season changes (e.g., impacts on fish staging for spawning in the spring).

The Plan Development Team will revise the Draft Addendum based on the above changes, and the Board will consider approving the revised draft addendum for public comment in August 2025.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the Stock Assessment Subcommittee nominations for striped bass as modified today.

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment for Atlantic Striped Bass.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by unanimous consent

Move to remove the entire section 3.3 Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding from the document.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion fails for lack of majority (7 in favor, 7 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove Option 4 from Section 3.3 (0.8% commercial reductions)

Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to remove all the split separate equal mode reduction options.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to remove the ocean size limit options of 37"-40" and 38"-41".

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion

Move to add the Maryland baseline season option to Draft Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend to add contingent upon final review by the TC and SAS of the modifications that were made.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Kane. Motion passes (15 in favor, 1 abstention).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to add the Maryland baseline season option to Draft Addendum III contingent upon final review by the TC and SAS of the modifications that were made.

Motion passes (13 in favor, 2 abstentions, 1 null).

Move to task the PDT with developing a sub-option for the MD season option that would add an uncertainty buffer

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion passes (9 in favor, 5 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove the entire section 3.2 Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of Sale vs. Point of Harvest from the document

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion fails (3 in favor, 10 opposed, 3 abstentions).

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (MAY 6 & 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) welcomed Captain David Bailey from Maryland Natural Resource Police and Captain Jack Chapin from the Massachusetts Environmental Police as new state representatives. Additionally, the committee recognized the retirement and offered gratitude to NOAA General Counsel Attorney Robert Hogan, for his years of support and participation in the LEC. Mr. Joseph Heckwolf succeeds Mr. Hogan as the new committee member from NOAA General Counsel.

Species Discussion

Atlantic Striped Bass – The LEC held a virtual meeting on March 27, 2025, to address the Striped Bass Plan Development Team questions regarding Draft Addendum III of the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. A comprehensive meeting summary was provided to the Striped Bass Management Board during the Spring meeting week.

Bluefish – Staff briefed the committee on the Technical Committee's (TC) application of the Risk and Uncertainty Tool. The TC is considering using this tool to quantify management uncertainty within the commercial and recreational bluefish fisheries. Two of the seven elements of this tool, Compliance and Enforcement, have enforcement implications and may require the LEC input beyond state compliance reports. The goal of this presentation was to open a dialogue with the LEC and to familiarize the committee with this tool for its future application in fishery management.

Other Business

Case Study - New Hampshire Fish and Game

Lieutenant Delayne Brown presented a case study concerning striped bass enforcement efforts by the New Hampshire Fish and Game department during the Summer of 2024. Two specific cases were highlighted: Case #1 – Castles, Diburro, and Cotone; and Case #2 – Travis.

Lieutenant Brown provided an in-depth study of the origin, procedures, and penalties associated with these cases. Both incidents involved Massachusetts commercial fishers crossing into New Hampshire state waters and exceeding the permitted limit for taking possession of oversized striped bass. Lieutenant Brown shared details of the initial reports of illegal activity, a comprehensive operational plan, and the surveillance techniques employed to apprehend the poachers. The investigations' strengths and weaknesses were discussed as learning tools for other agencies. Lieutenant Brown acknowledged the cooperation and effort of the Massachusetts Environmental Police, Maine Marine Patrol, and several local police agencies in successfully resolving these cases.

The penalty phase resulted in a total of thirty-four warnings issued and forty-six violations cited, amounting to fines totaling \$5,478.00. Additionally, the State of Massachusetts is taking action to suspend the commercial permits of these fishers under the Interstate Wildlife Violators Compact.

Website – The LEC was presented with the new ASMFC website. Staff provided a tutorial on accessing relevant information, including the LEC page, meetings page, and specific ASMFC guiding documents. LEC offered positive comments regarding the design of the new site.

A closed session of the meeting was afforded to openly discuss new and emerging law enforcement issues.

Respective agencies were provided with time to highlight their agencies and offer current enforcement efforts. For more information, please contact Kurt Blanchard, LEC Coordinator, kurt.blanchard@verizon.net.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MAY 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to discuss several issues, including reviewing the proposed FY26 budget, the Discussion Paper on Declared Interests and Voting Privileges, a Legislative Committee update, CARES update, and a future annual meeting locations update. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- A lengthy discussion was held on the *Discussion Paper on Declared Interests and Voting Privileges*. The Paper focuses on three issues: 1) declared interests, 2) voting privileges, and 3) virtual and hybrid meeting participation. The discussion focused on issues 1 and 2. Staff was asked to draft options for modifying the criteria for qualifying for an interest in a fishery. Staff will also develop further options related to voting privileges for consideration at the Summer Meeting.
- Staff presented an update on the Sportfish Restoration reauthorization effort, the status of the FY25 federal budget and NOAA's development of that budget, the status of the FY26 budget and submission of appropriations requests, and a summary of the recent fisheries Executive Order.
- Staff provided an update on the status of the remaining issues with New Jersey and Florida CARES payments due to be repaid after audits found funds made some more than whole or they were ineligible to receive any funds at all.
- Staff Leach provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations. October 26-30, 2025 the Annual Meeting will be in Dewey Beach, Delaware; in 2026 Rhode Island; 2027 South Carolina; 2028 Massachusetts; 2029 Pennsylvania and 2030 Georgia.

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

Motions

Move to approve the FY26 proposed budget as presented at this meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM COORDINATING COUNCIL (MAY 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council met to review and approve the FY2026 Request for Proposals (RFP) and review project and program updates.

The Council approved the FY2026 RFP as presented by the Operations Committee and Advisory Panel. The documents included adjusting the primary program priorities to elevate the socioeconomic module and decrease the catch-effort module to reflect past accomplishments and future direction of the ACCSP, adjusting the secondary program priorities to align the socioeconomic module with the three other modules, and adding an Impact on Management score similar to the existing Impact on Stock Assessment. The RFP also includes updated priority matrices from the Biological Review Panel and Bycatch Committees.

Staff presented an update of ACCSP program activities, including software development timelines and projects, major cross-team projects, recreational initiatives and the status of ACCSP regional partner coordination. Stephanie Iverson (VMRC) was recognized for her 25+ years of service to ACCSP.

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

Motions

Move to approve the ACCSP FY2026 RFP including updated priorities as presented in the funding decision document, biological and bycatch matrices.

Motion made by Ms. Zobel and seconded by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met to consider the final report from the Work Group on Precautionary Management in Chesapeake Bay, review a progress update on the ecological reference point (ERP) benchmark stock assessment, and provide direction to the Technical Committee (TC) on stock projections for 2026-2028.

In August 2024, the Board established a Work Group to gain additional information and evaluate options for further precautionary management in Chesapeake Bay, including time/area closures. The Work Group met nine times from September 2024 to April 2025, and develop a report based on Chesapeake Bay predator and fishery data. The Work Group addressed its task without determining if there is or is not an adequate supply of menhaden to support predatory demand in the Bay; instead, it is the responsibility of the Board to determine if or when it is necessary to implement them. Based on the life history of the predators examined, the nature of Chesapeake Bay

menhaden fisheries, and recent changes in menhaden availability, the Work Group discussed a number of precautionary management options that the Board could consider for further action (see [Work Group Report](#)). The Board discussed tasking the Technical Committee (TC) with evaluating options in the report, but in consideration of the priority for the TC and Ecological Reference Point (ERP) Work Group to complete the single-species assessment update and ERP benchmark assessment for presentation to the Board at the Annual Meeting, the Board decided to continue the discussion of the report at the Summer Meeting.

The Board received a progress report on the ERP benchmark stock assessment. The Board reviewed the conclusions of the Natural Mortality Work Group established by the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) to consider concerns raised about the estimate of natural mortality. After identifying the discrepancies between two proposed estimates, the SAS developed a new base estimate of natural mortality for the single-species model, which will be reviewed through the ERP benchmark assessment peer-review. The ERP benchmark assessment will be peer-reviewed through the SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process in August 2025.

Stock projections are conducted after the stock assessment is complete to aid the Board in setting the Total Allowable Catch (TAC). Staff reviewed the previous projections requested prior to setting the TAC for 2023-2025 and requested the Board provide the TC with direction for conducting the projections for the next 3 years. The Board requested the projections include the TACs associated with a 40-60% probability of exceeding the ERP target for 2026-2028 combined and as separate years, and the percent risk of exceeding the ERP target and threshold for nine different TACs ranging from -20% to +20% of the current TAC in 5% increments when it considers specifications for the next one to three years at the Annual Meeting.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

No motions made.

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Tautog Management Board met to consider a Technical Committee (TC) report on the New York study of potential alternative commercial tags, receive a progress update on the 2025 stock assessment update, and elect a Board Chair.

In response to a Board task at the August 2023 meeting, the TC identified alternative tag types to evaluate for the commercial tagging program. The tags considered were T-Bar, strap, and Petersen disc tags. The strap tag is a smaller version of the current commercial tag that was previously studied in 2016 prior to the implementation of the tagging program. New York conducted a 30-day feasibility study of the T-Bar and strap tags and examined tagged fish for damage and signs of infection around the tag. After initial consideration, the Petersen disc was eliminated from contention due to the difficulty of application. There was no conclusive evidence of any infections forming for either tag

type, although some fish showed redness around the insertion point for both types. Challenges with the T-Bar tag were the inability to determine if the tag was inserted properly and a lower tag retention rate, as well as a significantly higher cost for both the tags and applicator when compared to the current tag. The strap tag created similar, albeit smaller, wounds to the current tag, but it is unclear that it would prevent the reported issues. Although, the smaller strap tag and its applicator are considerably cheaper than the current versions. Given the results and the costs, New York did not recommend any of the tags as a viable alternative to the current tag. The TC discussed the possibility of further testing but did not identify any new tag types to evaluate, and New York noted the funding and staffing challenges to continue to pursue additional studies. Given the lack of a viable alternative, the Board decided to maintain the commercial tagging program unchanged but would consider further testing of alternative tags if new information became available.

The Board received an update on the stock assessment update, which is scheduled to be presented to the Board at the Annual Meeting. The TC discussed the impact of upcoming changes to MRIP effort estimates in 2026 on the assessment. The TC recommended continuing the assessment on the current timeline given the length of time since the last assessment and the uncertainty of potential delays in the availability of the MRIP updates. The Board also elected Matt Gates as Chair.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to elect Matt Gates as Chair of the Tautog Management Board.

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Luisi.

HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 8, 2025)

Press Release

Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Addendum IX *Addendum Allows Multi-Year Specifications for Male-Only Harvest*

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved Addendum IX to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Horseshoe Crabs. The Addendum allows the Board to set specifications for male-only harvest. It also establishes a method for managing male-only harvest limits during multi-year specifications periods, reestablishes seasonal harvest restrictions, and clarifies policy related to harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia.

Addendum IX responds to recommendations from the July 2024 Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop, which convened a group of stakeholders to explore management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab fishery. Workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values.

The Addendum allows the Board to set multi-year specifications for up to three years until 2031 based on the ARM Framework. In interim years when the ARM is not used, the Board will manage maximum

male harvest limits based on Delaware Bay region spawning survey data. Addendum IX also reestablishes a harvest closure for the Delaware Bay region states from January 1 through June 7. Lastly, the Addendum clarifies the policy included in Addenda VII and VIII for applying Maryland and Virginia harvest caps; these caps further restrict harvest for Maryland and Virginia when female harvest is implemented in the Delaware Bay region.

Addendum IX will be available on the Commission website at <https://asmfc.org/species/horseshoe-crab/> by next week. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR25-13

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Addendum IX, the Horseshoe Crab Management Board reviewed recommendations from the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Subcommittee and discussed the composition of the Advisory Panel (AP).

In February, the Board tasked the ARM Subcommittee with reviewing the reward and utility functions of the ARM Framework and discussing what input from stakeholder groups would be needed to provide directions on potential changes. This task responded to a recommendation from the July 2024 stakeholder workshop on horseshoe crab management in the Delaware Bay region. The ARM Subcommittee recommended initiating a process to seek stakeholder input on various value-based aspects of the reward, utility, and harvest policy functions of the ARM Framework. The Board supported pursuing such a process, which could include educational meetings and a stakeholder workshop to identify changes to these functions that would better reflect current stakeholder values. Funding would need to be identified to conduct a workshop.

Responding to another recommendation from the July 2024 workshop, the Board also discussed possible changes to the AP. The current composition of the AP includes state-specific seats and two seats for non-traditional stakeholders. The Board expressed interest in reshaping the panel so that there is a more even distribution of advisors from each region (northeast, New York, Delaware Bay, and Southeast). It also determined that an open solicitation process should be used to seek additional nominations for non-traditional stakeholders (e.g., conservation interests). The Board agreed to form a Work Group to develop recommendations on an appropriate distribution of advisors and review new nominations.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Main Motion

Move to adopt Options 1B and 1B-1 under Issue 1, Option 2B under Issue 2, and Option 3B under Issue 3.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Kennedy. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend**Move to amend to replace 1B-1 with 1B-2.**

Motion made by Ms. Lengyel Costa and seconded by Mr. Hyatt. Motion passes (9 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstentions).

Main Motion as Amended**Move to adopt Options 1B and 1B-2 under Issue 1, Option 2B under Issue 2, and Option 3B under Issue 3.**

Motion passes (11 in favor, 4 abstentions).

Move to approve Addendum IX with the management options selected today. The Addendum is effective immediately, and measures pertaining to the season closure in the Delaware Bay must be implemented by January 1, 2026.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Lengyel Costa. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion**Move to approve the nominations of Edwin Chiofolo and Arthur (Pete) Bender to the Advisory Panel.**

Motion made by Mr. Hornstein and seconded by Mr. Geer. Postponed.

Motion to Postpone**Move to postpone until the Board has made a decision on how to compose the Advisory Panel.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

COMMISSION BUSINESS SESSION (MAY 8, 2025)***Press Release*****ASMFC Approves Amendment 4
to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp**

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Northern Shrimp. In response to the continued poor condition of the northern shrimp stock, Amendment 4 modifies the first objective of the FMP to recognize the influence of environmental conditions on stock productivity and lengthens the amount of time the Northern Shrimp Section can set a moratorium from one year to up to five years. The Section can call a meeting at any time to review information relative to the fishery and the resource and initiate management action if necessary.

Amendment 4 also adds management triggers to the FMP as part of the annual stock monitoring process. Management triggers include recruitment and temperature triggers that signal potential improvement in stock conditions. The recruitment trigger will be achieved when the stock experiences non-failed recruitment for three consecutive years. If achieved, a stock assessment update will be conducted. If the recruitment trigger is not achieved, but non-failed recruitment occurs in two out of three years, the Section will consider conducting a winter sampling program

without the use of size-sorting grates. This program will allow the Northern Shrimp Technical Committee to evaluate stage and length frequencies, and year class persistence before initiating a full assessment update. The temperature trigger will be considered reached when two out of three consecutive years of winter surface temperature and spring bottom temperature in the Gulf of Maine fall below the 80th percentile of the reference period. If achieved, the Section will consider a winter sampling program. These triggers are intended to help the Section identify if the stock is viable enough to support a fishery.

Finally, Amendment 4 adds the specifications setting timeline and management triggers to measures subject to change through adaptive management, allowing these management measures to be changed in the future via an addendum rather than an amendment.

All provisions of Amendment 4 are considered effective immediately. Amendment 4 will be available on the Commission's website, <https://asmfc.org/species/northern-shrimp/>, by the end of May. For more information, please contact Chelsea Tuohy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at <mailto:ctouhy@asmfc.org> or 703.842.0740.

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PR25-14

Motions

On behalf of the Northern Shrimp Section, move the Commission approve Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp as amended by the Section

Motion by Mr. Grout. Motion passes with one objection.