



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 82nd Annual Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 82nd Annual Meeting
October 21 - 24, 2024

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 21, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to consider setting specifications for the 2025-2027 fishing years and to set quota periods for the 2025 Area 1A fishery.

In September 2024, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) voted on a 2025-2027 specifications package to be submitted to NOAA Fisheries for review and approval. NEFMC's recommended specifications are based on the 2024 Atlantic herring stock assessment and use the Atlantic herring biomass-based control rule. NEFMC noted these specifications are very low, and the 2025 Annual Catch Limit (ACL) would be the lowest in the history of the FMP. In addition to the specifications package, NEFMC also put forward two requests to NOAA Fisheries. First, the Council requested an in-season adjustment to reduce the default 2025 specifications (currently in place) to the new, lower specifications before the 2025 fishing year begins. Second, NEFMC also requested nullification of the quota carryover from 2023 to 2025 given concern about the magnitude of those carryover amounts relative to the very low quotas for 2025. The Board adopted the 2025-2027 specifications package as recommended by NEFMC, contingent on the final rule being published by NOAA Fisheries.

The Board considered quota periods for the 2025 Area 1A fishery. Per Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring, quota periods shall be determined annually for Area 1A. The Board can consider distributing the Area 1A sub-ACL using bi-monthly, trimester, or seasonal quota periods. The Board can also decide whether quota from January through May will be allocated later in the fishing season, and underages may be rolled from one period to the next within the same year. For the 2025 Area 1A fishery, the Board adopted a seasonal quota approach with 72.8% available June-September and 27.2% available October-December with underages from June through September rolled into the October through December period, if applicable. These 2025 quota periods are the same as the quota periods implemented for the last five fishing years.

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

Motions

Move to adopt the following 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 = 2,710 mt**
- **Area 1A Sub-ACL = 783 mt**
- **Area 1B Sub-ACL = 117 mt**
- **Area 2 Sub-ACL = 753 mt**
- **Area 3 Sub-ACL = 1,057 mt**

For 2026 and 2027

- Annual Catch Limit (ACL) / Domestic Annual Harvest = 6,854 mt
- Area 1A Sub-ACL = 1,981 mt
- Area 1B Sub-ACL = 295 mt
- Area 2 Sub-ACL = 1,905 mt
- Area 3 Sub-ACL = 2,673 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. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes (7 in favor, 1 opposed).
Roll Call: In favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, NY, NJ, NOAA Fisheries; Opposed – CT.

Move to implement seasonal distribution of quota for the 2025 Area 1A sub-ACL with 72.8% available from June through September and 27.2% allocated from October through December, with no landings prior to June 1, and for underages to be rolled over into the next quota period. The fishery will close when 92% of the seasonal period's quota has been projected to be harvested.
Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Kaelin. Motion carries with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 21, 2024)

Press Release

American Lobster Board Approves Addendum XXXI to Postpone Implementation of Addendum XXVII Measures

Annapolis, MD – The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum XXXI to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum postpones the implementation of certain measures from Addendum XXVII to July 1, 2025 to allow Canada more time to consider implementing complementary management measures, as well as reduce potential impacts to the US and Canadian lobster industries.

In October 2023, 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 (OCC) were triggered based on observed changes in recruit abundance indices. Initially, these measures were to be implemented in June 2024. However, in response to concerns raised by industry and the State of Maine, the Board extended the implementation date 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 June 2024, US and Canadian lobster fishery managers and industry members met to discuss the management structures and stock assessments of the two countries. Based on these discussions, the Board determined that postponing implementation for an additional six months would allow further consideration of complementary measures by Canada, as well as offset potential impacts to the lobster industry that imports smaller lobster in the early part of the year.

Based on Addendum XXXI, the following measures will be implemented starting July 1, 2025:

- Measures under Section 3.1 of Addendum XXVII to create a common size limit and v-notch definition for state-only and federal permit holders fishing in OCC
- Increases in the LCMA 1 minimum gauge and vent sizes, and decrease to the maximum gauge size for LCMA 3 and OCC under Section 3.2 of Addendum XXVII

Addendum XXXI does not postpone regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in Areas 1 and 3 above the trap limit or allocation; this provision will become effective January 1, 2025. Addendum XXXI will be available on the Commission website, www.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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PR24-29

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Addendum XXXI, the Board received a stock assessment progress update, a data update of American lobster stock indices, a report on the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review for the 2023 Fishing Year, and discussed Addendum XXIX vessel tracking requirements.

The ongoing benchmark stock assessment is expected to be completed and presented to the Board in October 2025. Two workshops have been held to review available data and discuss modeling methods. An assessment workshop will be held in February to finalize the assessment models.

The Board reviewed the annual Data Update for American lobster stock indices, as recommended by the 2020 stock assessment. The Data Update provides the Board with the most recent indices of exploitable lobster stock abundance conditions so it can monitor changes in stock abundance between assessments. Young-of-year (YOY) settlement indicators, trawl survey indicators, and ventless trap survey abundance indices were updated with 2023 data, and compared to the stock assessment time series. Since the last year of assessment data (2018), Gulf of Maine indicators for recruits and adults continue to show declines from time series highs observed during the stock assessment, but YOY indicators show some improvement. Georges Bank indicators show slight improvement since the stock assessment, while Southern New England indicators show continued unfavorable conditions, with most updated indicators at or near time series lows.

The Board approved the FMP Review and state compliance reports for American lobster and Jonah crab for the 2023 fishing year, as well as de minimis status for Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Additionally, it discussed the requirement of Addendum XXIX for federally-permitted vessels to use tracking devices for the collection of spatial fishing effort data at all times. The Board acknowledges privacy concerns from fishermen about tracking data being collected during personal non-fishing trips, and is also considering law enforcement concerns about the difficulty of enforcing the regulations if the devices could be turned on and off manually. The Board will continue to explore possible modifications to the approved tracking devices and rules that could address these concerns while minimizing data losses and enforcement challenges.

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

Motions

Move to adopt Option B and approve Addendum XXXI, as modified today, to be effective immediately

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion passes with one objection. Roll Call: In favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA; Opposed – NOAA.

Move to approve the Lobster and Jonah Crab FMP Reviews for the 2023 fishing year, state compliance reports, and de minimis status for DE, MD, and VA.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion passes without opposition.

ATLANTIC COASTAL FISH HABITAT PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE (October 21 & 22, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The ACFHP Steering Committee approved several key items, including the New England Fishery Management Council membership application and the FY26 Project Funding Application. The Committee also discussed an operations budget increase from \$85,000 to \$125,000, with an additional \$40,000 in coordination funding under consideration. Updates on Science & Data initiatives included plans to inform guidance for seed-based submerged aquatic vegetation (i.e., eelgrass) restoration techniques and develop related workshops. Two new work groups were created to engage with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process for hydropower projects and updates to State Wildlife Action Plans. Additionally, the Committee began developing the next 2025-2026 ACFHP action plan to guide upcoming priorities. Guest speakers Jason Olive (USFWS), Alex McOwen (NOAA), and Daniel Wieferich (USGS) contributed updates on National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) activities and insights on national habitat initiatives and opportunities for collaboration.

Project updates included progress on FY24 restoration efforts, such as the Maryland Coastal Bays Salt Marsh Restoration project, which recently expanded its scope from 39 to 114 acres of wetland restoration across two private properties, and the design and permitting for the Upper E.R. Collins Dam Removal, opening 3 miles of the Pequest River in New Jersey. For FY25, ACFHP retained top-tier funding status, securing approximately \$300,000 for three projects: Cedar Grove Dam and No Name Dam removals on the Pequest River, which will restore 57 miles of river habitat as part of a larger dam removal initiative that includes the Upper and Lower E.R. Dams; and the Matanzas River Oyster Reef Restoration in Florida, which will create 500 feet of living shoreline using innovative oyster arches. The meeting also highlighted the new [NFHP Project Accomplishment Map](#), now live on the NFHP website (fishhabitat.org), which showcases project successes and active initiatives across the 20 regional fish habitat partnerships (FHPs).

For more information, please contact Simen Kaalstad, ACFHP Director, at skaalstad@asmfc.org.

ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM COORDINATING COUNCIL (OCTOBER 21, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The ACCSP Coordinating Council met to consider the FY2025 Partner and administrative proposals. The Council approved the ACCSP administrative grant and all three (3) maintenance proposals for FY2025 ranked and recommended by the Advisory and Operations Committees. The Council also voted

to fully support the top four ranked new proposals, with the additional support for the Maine halibut sampling if funding allows. The Council noted appreciation to the Operations and Advisors on the work done to rank proposals and provide thoughtful recommendations to utilize available funding.

The Council was presented an update of ACCSP program activities, including software development timelines, status of 2024 action plan items, planning for 2025 ASMFC Action Plan, and the need for more Advisors to be appointed by Council members.

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

Motions

Move to approve the ACCSP Administrative Proposal.

Motion made by Ms. Salmon and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes by unanimous approval.

Move to approve the three (3) Maintenance Proposals as recommended by the Operations and Advisory Committees.

Motion made by Ms. Kennedy and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion passes by unanimous approval.

Move to approve the top four (4) ranking New Proposals, through the Maine Black Sea Bass project.

Motion made by Mr. Carmichael and seconded by Mr. Owens. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move that the Maine halibut proposal remain above the line to be funded if additional funding become available.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Burgess. Motion approved by consent.

Move to approve Rene Zobel as Vice-chair of the ACCSP Coordinating Council

Motion made by Mr. Beal and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion passes by consent.

HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 21, 2024)

Press Release

Horseshoe Crab Board Sets 2025 Specifications for Horseshoe Crabs of Delaware Bay-Origin and Initiates Draft Addendum IX to Consider Multi-Year Specifications

Annapolis, MD – The Commission’s Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved harvest specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay-origin. Taking into consideration the output of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, the Board set a harvest limit of 500,000 male horseshoe crabs and zero female Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crabs for the 2025 season.

The Board elected to maintain zero female horseshoe crab harvest for the 2025 season as a conservative measure, considering continued public concern about the status of the red knot population in the Delaware Bay. To make up for the lost harvest of larger female crabs, the Board agreed to increase Maryland and Virginia’s male harvest quotas with an offset ratio of 2:1 males to females. Using the allocation methodology established in Addendum VIII, the following quotas were set for New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia:

	Delaware Bay Origin Horseshoe Crab Quota (no. of crabs)	Total Quota**
State	Male Only	Male Only
Delaware	173,014	173,014
New Jersey	173,014	173,014
Maryland	132,865	255,980
Virginia*	21,107	81,331

*Virginia harvest refers to harvest east of the COLREGS line only

**Total harvest quotas for Maryland and Virginia include crabs which are not of Delaware Bay origin.

The Board also initiated Draft Addendum IX, which will consider adding an additional specifications tool that would allow for male-only harvest for multiple years. The Draft Addendum responds to recommendations from the Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop held in July 2024. The Workshop convened a small group of stakeholders to explore management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab fishery. The workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the ARM Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values.

The Board will consider Draft Addendum IX for public comment in February 2025. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR24-30

Meeting Summary

In addition to setting Delaware Bay harvest specifications and initiating Draft Addendum IX, the Board also considered a report on the outcomes of the July Management Objectives Workshop, and the FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year.

In July, a workshop was held with stakeholders interested in Delaware Bay region horseshoe crab management. Workshop participants represented harvesters and dealers, biomedical industry, environmental NGOs, shorebird and horseshoe crab scientists, and resource managers. The workshop aimed to identify stakeholders’ values and concerns regarding the ARM Framework, as well as common ground for management. The Board considered several potential next steps based on the consensus recommendations developed at the workshop. In addition to considering the ability set multi-year specifications for male-only harvest through Draft Addendum IX, the Board supported recommendations to begin a dialogue with key stakeholders to better understand essential concerns for management, explore changes to the reward and utility functions of the ARM model with stakeholder input, evaluate the Advisory Panel membership to ensure adequate representation of various stakeholder groups, and improve science communication about the ARM and channels for public participation.

The Board approved the FMP Review and state compliance reports for horseshoe crab for the 2023 fishing year, as well as *de minimis* status for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The Plan Review Team recommended the Board evaluate the season start date for commercial bait harvest in the Delaware Bay region; a common season start date for Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia to protect crabs during the spawning season will be considered in Draft Addendum IX.

Lastly, Eric Reid from Rhode Island was elected Vice-Chair to the Horseshoe Crab Board. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to initiate an addendum to consider the ability to set multi-year specifications for male-only horseshoe crab harvest of Delaware Bay-origin Horseshoe Crab based on the ARM Framework or an alternative male-only harvest specification setting method.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion approved by consent with 3 abstentions (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida).

Move to accept the 2025 Adaptive Resource Management harvest specifications with 500,000 males and no female harvest of Delaware Bay-origin crabs. In addition, the 2:1 offset will be added to MD's and VA's allocations due to no female harvest.

Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion approved by consent with 3 abstentions (South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida)

Move that the draft addendum initiated today also consider establishing a season start date of June 8 for the Delaware Bay region.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Kane. Motion passes with abstentions from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Move to approve the Horseshoe Crab FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to nominate Eric Reid as Vice-Chair of the Horseshoe Crab Board.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes.

SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 22, 2024)

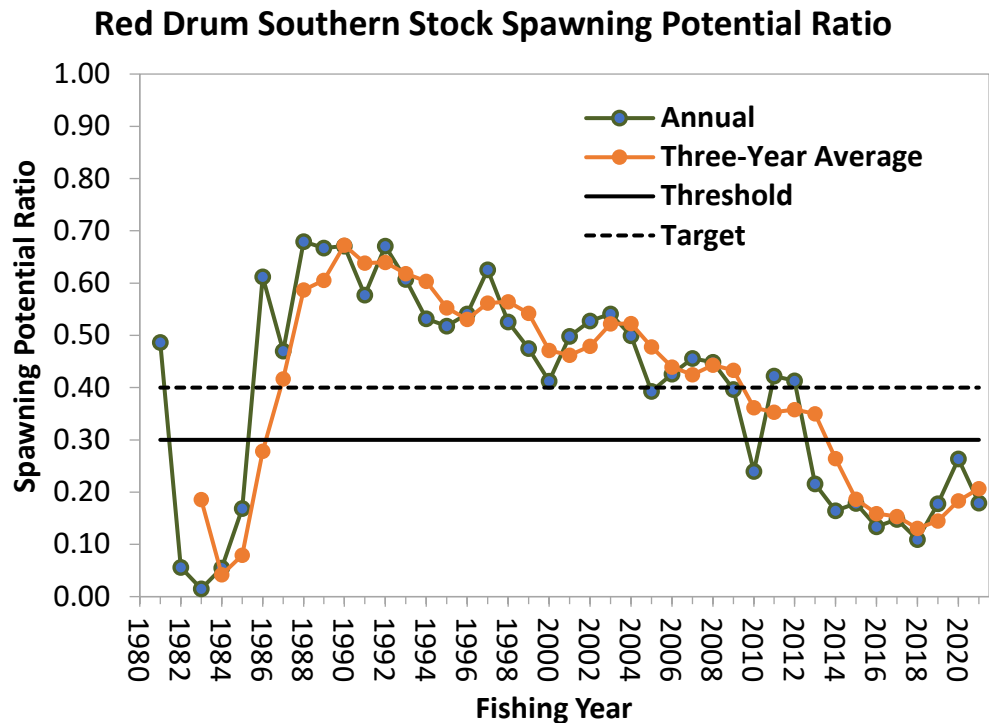
Press Release

Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment Finds Mixed Results for the Northern and Southern Stocks: Northern Stock Not Overfishing and Overfishing Not Occurring; Southern Stock Overfished and Experiencing Overfishing

Annapolis, MD – The 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicates the northern stock of red drum (New Jersey through North Carolina) is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, while the southern stock (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is overfished and experiencing overfishing.

The two stocks were assessed separately, using different methods. The southern stock was assessed using the Stock Synthesis (SS) assessment model. Stock status is based on the latest three-year (2019-2021 September-August fishing years) averages of population measures. The three-year average spawning potential ratio (SPR) is less than the 30% SPR threshold, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing. Spawning potential ratio is a measure of spawning biomass expected under current fishing

mortality levels compared to spawning stock biomass expected if no fishing mortality were occurring. The three-year average female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was 8,737 metric tons (19.27 million pounds), less than the SSB threshold of 9,917 metric tons (21.87 million pounds), indicating the stock is overfished.



A robust, technically-sound SS model could not be developed for the northern stock, so the stock was assessed using a traffic light analysis (TLA). The TLA assigns a color (red, yellow or green) to categorize relative levels of metrics that reflect the condition of red drum adult abundance and fishery performance (i.e., fishing mortality). Although these metrics were not red in the last three years of the assessment, indicating the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, consistent yellow fishery performance metrics indicated increasing fishing mortality in recent years. Continued monitoring of the northern stock and the increasing trend in fishing mortality is recommended in future years through updates to the TLA.

Red drum fisheries are predominately recreational. Removals (harvest + dead discards) increased to relatively high levels at the end of the assessment time series for both stocks. In the northern stock, removals have increased to time series highs. In the southern stock, they have increased to levels similar to time series highs observed in the early 1980s.

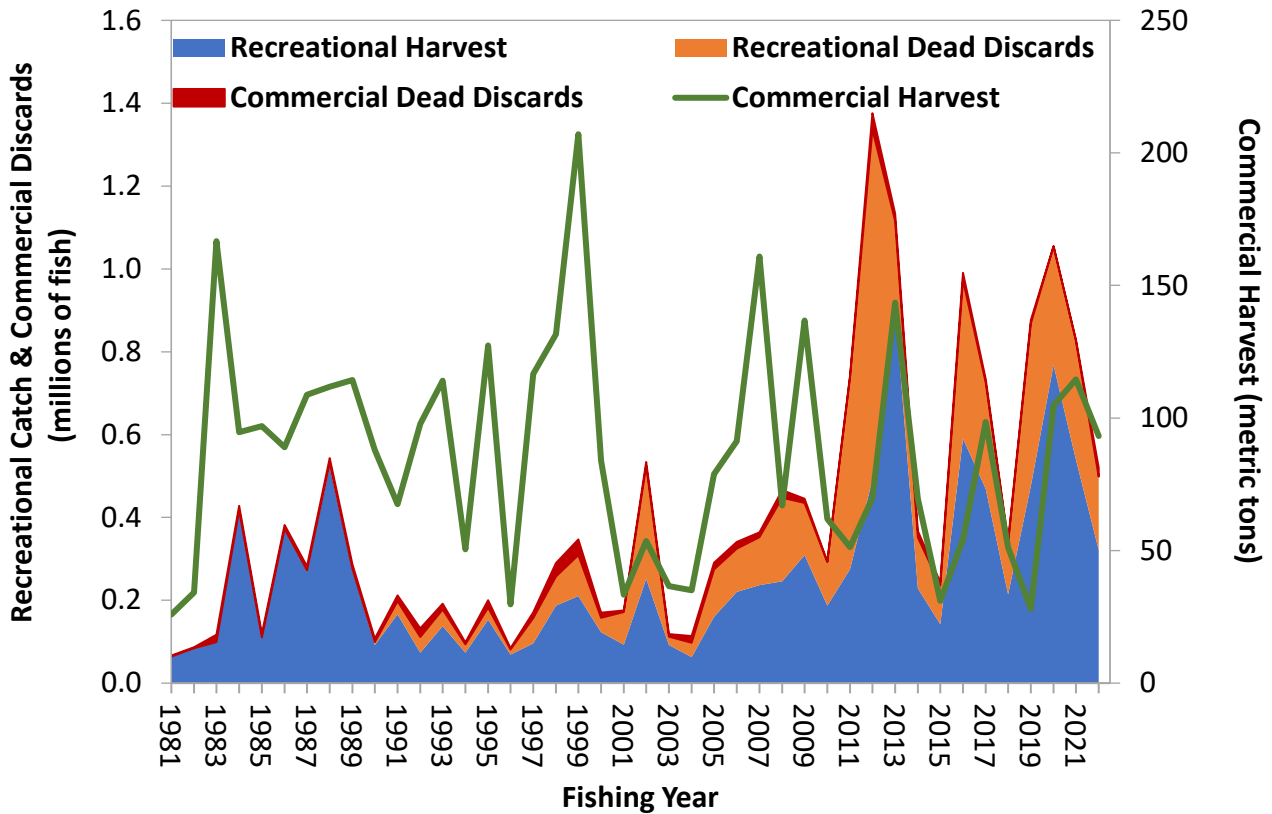
Commercial landings currently only occur in the northern stock, but are a small proportion of total removals and have fluctuated without trend.

The Commission’s Sciaenids Management Board accepted the benchmark stock assessment and peer review reports for management use and tasked the Red Drum Technical Committee with additional analyses to evaluate possible paths forward for red drum management.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results, as well as the Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports, will be available on the Commission website at <https://asmfc.org/species/red-drum> under Stock Assessment Reports.

For more information on the stock assessment, please contact Jeff Kipp, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at jkipp@asmfc.org; and for more information on red drum management, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

Red Drum Northern Stock Fishery Removals



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PR24-31

Meeting Summary

In addition to considering the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports, the Sciaenids Management Board (Board) met to consider several items: discussion of the Risk and Uncertainty Tool inputs for red drum; update of the black drum indicators; and Fishery Management Plan Reviews and state compliance reports for black drum and spotted seatrout.

The Board received a progress update on the Commission’s Risk and Uncertainty Tool (Tool) for red drum, as previously introduced to the Board at its [October 3, 2024 meeting](#). Briefly, the Tool uses information on stock status, model uncertainty, management uncertainty, ecosystem considerations, and socioeconomic factors to recommend the probability of success that management actions should strive to achieve. The Board reviewed preliminary input values to the Tool as recommended by the Red Drum Technical Committee and Committee of Economics and Social Sciences, as well as a summary of preliminary weightings for all inputs from a survey completed by Board members. The Board will continue to discuss the Tool’s inputs and how they are weighted, in addition to inputs based on preliminary projections, for red drum at future meetings.

The Board received a presentation from the Chair of the Black Drum Technical Committee (TC) on the results of an update to the black drum indicators of abundance and stock and fishery characteristics developed during the 2023 benchmark stock assessment, as well as recommendations from the TC based on a prior request from the Board to reevaluate the frequency of future updates. This update incorporated one additional year of data (2023). The TC agreed that, generally, there were no concerning trends in the indicators, which continued to fall within their respective historical ranges. The TC recommended scheduling the next data update to the indicators in 2026, and moving the next black drum stock assessment from 2027 to 2028. The Board agreed with the TC's recommendations. For more information, please refer to the [TC memo](#) summarizing the results of the data update.

The Board reviewed and approved the 2023 Fishing Year FMP Reviews and state compliance reports for black drum and spotted seatrout. For spotted seatrout, *de minimis* status was approved for New Jersey and Delaware.

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

Motions

Move to accept the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Dyar and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Motion to request the Stock Assessment Subcommittee/Technical Committee to produce the static spawning potential ratio for a range of slot size limits (between 14" and 27") associated with bag limits ranging from 0 to 5 fish per person for: (a) the southern region and/or (b) SC, GA, FL individually.

Motion made by Mr. Dyar and seconded by Mr. Woodward. Motion approved by unanimous consent

Move to approve the Black Drum FMP Review and state compliance reports for the 2023 fishing year.

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Rhodes. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

Move to approve the Spotted Seatrout FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for New Jersey and Delaware.

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (OCTOBER 22 & 23, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a hybrid meeting during the 82nd Annual meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in Annapolis, Maryland. The

Committee welcomed LTC. Doug Daniels as the new representative from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Species Issues

Atlantic Striped Bass – Staff updated the LEC on the status of the Recreational Release Mortality Working Group findings and recommendations from a series of meetings held over this past summer. Members of the LEC participated in the work group discussions and provided comments on the enforceability of “targeting” and gear provisions. Staff also provided an update on the stock status and the potential for management changes in 2025.

Atlantic Cobia – Staff provided an update on the proposed regional recreational management measures considered under Addendum II of the Atlantic Cobia FMP.

Spiny Dogfish – Staff presented the sturgeon bycatch reduction measures of Draft Addendum VII to the Spiny Dogfish FMP. The proposed management options under Section 3 were discussed by the LEC. The LEC recognized that not all jurisdictions have like permitting of this fishery and appreciate the Boards efforts to consider enforcement of this proposal. In consideration of the proposed options, the consensus of the LEC is to support Option 2.

The LEC will continue to monitor the development of this addendum and offer guidance where appropriate.

Winter Flounder – Staff updated the LEC on the Board approval of the conservation equivalency proposal of a Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Pilot Program for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As presented, this proposal will allow for fishermen fishing Massachusetts state waters, north of Cape Cod, to take and possess a consecutive two-day trip limit of winter flounder, with certain program requirements. At the time of Board’s consideration of this proposal, the LEC offered shared experiences with similar programs utilized in other fisheries and supported this pilot program based on the commitment of close monitoring and enforcement by the state. MA DMF has committed to providing a review of the pilot program in its annual compliance report. To enhance enforceability, the LEC wishes to reinforce the use of VMS in this type of program.

Other Business

“Guidelines” – The LEC was updated on the ISFMP Policy Board approval of the *Guidelines for Resource Managers on the Enforceability of Fishery Management Measures* (May 2024). The sixth edition of this document was approved at the May 2024 ISFMP Policy Board meeting. Members were encouraged to share this document with their respective commissioners as well as fishery managers in their home state.

Global Conservation Law Enforcement Network (GCLLEN) – Members of the National Associations of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC) presented on the GCLLEN. This is a new communication and information network that provides a platform for global collaboration of conservation law enforcement agencies. Users will have the ability to network and message with specific subject matter experts from participating countries.

Case Study – Members from the United States Department of Justice and NOAA Office for Law Enforcement presented on a case from “Operation One-Way Chandelier.” This investigation and prosecution were part of a multi-year investigation into fisheries fraud in New York. The investigation led to an indictment of one fisher, a wholesale fish dealer, and two of its managers for conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and obstruction in connection with a scheme to illegally overharvest at least 200,000 #’s of summer flounder and 20,000#’s of black sea bass. An estimated combined wholesale value of \$885,000. On July 11, 2024, the fisher, the last of the indicted individuals was sentenced to serve 30 months incarceration.

On Demand Fishing – The LEC discussed the topic of “on demand fishing” with the Chair of both the American Lobster Management Board and the New England Fishery Management Council NEFMC LEC. The purpose of the discussion was to highlight this topic and to ask the LEC to consider collaborating with the Council’s law enforcement advisors in future development of regulations related to on-demand trap gear.

LEC Role and Expectation – With membership turnover within the LEC over the past few years, the new Chair, Scott Pearce, asked for training on the Role and Expectations of the LEC membership. The LEC members were provided information on the ISFMP Charter, 2025 Action Plan and ASMFC resources. The travel guidelines of the Commission were also reviewed.

Website – The LEC was also briefed on the status of the ASMFC website upgrade and has provided relevant information and graphics to support the upgrade.

A closed session of our 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, Law Enforcement Committee Coordinator, at kurt.blanchard@verizon.net.

COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 22, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Coastal Pelagics Management Board met to receive an update on the Cobia Stock Assessment SEDAR 95; consider 2025-2026 cobia recreational management measures for the Northern Region; review a Cobia Technical Committee Report on the confidence interval approach for cobia recreational harvest evaluations; and receive an update on South Atlantic Fishery Management Council port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel.

A benchmark stock assessment for Atlantic migratory group cobia, SEDAR 95, is being conducted through the SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process. Assessment work began in March 2024 with an initial expected completion date of November 2025. However, the timeline has been delayed (likely by at least one year) due to staff availability for a lead assessment analyst at the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The Board discussed the challenges of this delay, particularly regarding the next set of harvest specifications starting in 2027 with the current specifications expiring at the end of 2026. Additionally, this is a benchmark stock assessment

requiring more time for analysis and peer review to consider development of a new index of abundance and new modeling approaches, if needed. If this new stock assessment is not available to inform 2027 specifications, the Board would only have information from the previous stock assessment, which had a terminal year of 2017. The Board did acknowledge that the delayed timeline would align with the anticipated availability of revised MRIP data, so the new MRIP data could be incorporated into the stock assessment. The Board discussed whether assessment work could continue in some capacity before a lead assessment analyst from NOAA Fisheries is available, but the Board ultimately decided to wait for further updates from NOAA Fisheries and revisit this issue as needed over the next several months.

Cobia Addendum II established a new regional recreational allocation framework resulting in new regional harvest targets based on the current coastwide total recreational harvest quota in place through 2026. To determine 2025-2026 measures for each region, the average 2021-2023 recreational harvest for each region was compared against its regional harvest target. The Northern Region's (Rhode Island through Virginia) average harvest was above its target, requiring a 15.9% reduction in harvest. The Southern Region's (North Carolina through Georgia) average harvest was below its target, so states in the Southern Region will maintain status quo measures for 2025. The Cobia Technical Committee (TC) developed a suite of recreational management options for the Northern Region estimated to meet the required 15.9% reduction. Each option is comprised of three components: regionwide size limit, regionwide vessel limit, and a season for Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Virginia. Data are not available to calculate any reduction associated with implementing a season for Rhode Island through Delaware. The Board approved the TC's methodology for developing recreational options to meet the Northern Region reduction. States in the Northern Region will coordinate to select a regionwide size limit, regionwide vessel limit, and season for Maryland, PRFC, and Virginia. States will then submit implementation plans for Board consideration by January 1, 2025, and must implement the new measures by April 1, 2025. If States in the Northern Region cannot come to a consensus on which measures to implement, a virtual Board meeting will be scheduled to select measures.

The Board reviewed a Cobia TC report on the Addendum II confidence interval provision, which allows the Board to switch from the current rolling average approach using point estimates for harvest evaluations to a confidence interval approach using the 95% confidence intervals around the point estimate instead. The TC provided initial input on what the confidence interval approach might look like as applied to current data, and explored different confidence interval levels besides 95% (Note: the confidence interval level can only be changed via addendum). Overall, the TC noted that more time to consider this approach would be beneficial, including discussion by the Board of how the rolling average and confidence interval approaches would align with their management goals. The Board agreed that Board input is needed to inform further TC discussion, but the best way to gather that input is not clear at this point. Additionally, the confidence interval approach is one of several issues to consider simultaneously along with the stock assessment timeline and the challenge of setting future specifications and recreational management measures. One specific challenge the Board will have to address is how to consider 2027 regional recreational measures since there will only be one year of data available (2025 data) under the new measures being implemented in 2025. The Board will revisit these issues over the next several months as more updates on the stock assessment timeline are received and as the next specifications process approaches.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is conducting a series of port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel in 2024 to gain a comprehensive understanding of those fisheries from stakeholders to inform management efforts. Port meetings have already taken place in North Carolina, New England states (virtual), New York, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. Port meetings in Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey have been scheduled for November 18-21, 2024, and staff will distribute outreach materials to Board members in those states.

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

Motions

Move to approve the Cobia Technical Committee methodology for developing recreational management options to meet the northern region reduction. States in the northern region will select a set of measures for 2025-2026 and submit implementation plans for Board consideration by January 1, 2025. States in the northern region must implement the new measures by April 1, 2025. If states in the northern region cannot come to a consensus on which measures to implement, a virtual Board meeting will be scheduled to select measures.

Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes by consent with 3 abstentions (SC, GA, FL).

AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 22, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The American Eel Management Board met to consider information on possible future actions under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) that may impact American eel fisheries, and the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review for the 2023 Fishing Year. The Board received a presentation on several possible actions related to American eel that are being discussed within CITES committees: listing under Appendix II or Appendix III, and a resolution on American eel. Listing under CITES Appendix II would restrict international trade of American eel with permit and certificate requirements for export. Listing under Appendix III would require exporters to provide documentation proving legal acquisition of the product. A resolution would provide non-binding guidance to the parties on how to interpret the provisions of the Convention. The Board expressed concerns that listing American eel under Appendix II or III would be detrimental to American eel fisheries, especially if live eel exports are delayed by required certification processes. The Board agreed to send a letter to the US Fish and Wildlife Service opposing an Appendix II or III listing for American eel.

The Board also considered the FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year. As recommended by the Plan Review Team, the Board tasked the Committee on Economic and Social Sciences to conduct an analysis of domestic and international market demand for American eel as food and bait. The Board approved the FMP Review and state compliance reports for the 2023 fishing year, as well as *de minimis* status for New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and Georgia.

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

Motions

Move to approve the American Eel FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, DC, and Georgia.

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 22, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met to review an update from the Work Group on Precautionary Management in Chesapeake Bay, consider approval of the 2023 Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review, receive a progress report on the ecological reference point (ERP) benchmark stock assessment, and elect a Vice Chair.

In August, the Board established a Work Group to gain additional information and evaluate options for further precautionary management in Chesapeake Bay. The Work Group met in September and October to discuss the Board task and establish a problem statement. In drafting a problem statement, the Work Group sought confirmation from the Board that their task is to develop potential future management measures to address the problem statement, but that it is the responsibility of the Board to evaluate the validity of the statement and decide if or when management action would be appropriate. The Work Group will continue to evaluate potential data sources and develop management solutions to provide a full report to the Board at the 2025 Spring Meeting.

The Board approved the FMP Review for the 2023 fishing year, as well *de minimis* requests from Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) for the 2023 fishing year was 233,550 mt. According to state compliance reports, total catch in 2023 including directed and episodic event set aside (EESA) landings was approximately 166,844 mt, which is approximately 71% of the TAC and a 15% decrease from 2022. For the first time since the implementation of the incidental catch/small-scale fishery (IC/SSF) provision, there were no reported IC/SSF landings.

The Board received a progress report on the ERP benchmark stock assessment. The Stock Assessment Subcommittee and ERP Work Group will meet for a Methods Workshop in November 2024 to discuss natural mortality estimates and updates to the single-species model, as well as explore various modeling approaches to evaluate the health of the stock and inform the management of the species in an ecological context. The ERP benchmark stock assessment and single-species stock assessment update are both scheduled to be presented to the Board at the 2025 Annual Meeting. The Board also elected Joe Cimino as Vice Chair.

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

Motions

Move to approve the Fishery Management Plan Review, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests for PA, SC, GA, and FL for Atlantic menhaden for the 2023 fishing year.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion approved by consent.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (OCTOBER 23, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee (Committee) met to discuss several issues, including review of the FY24 Audit, a Legislative Committee update and a future annual meeting locations update. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- The FY24 Audit was reviewed by the Administrative Oversight Committee and forwarded to the Executive Committee with a recommendation for approval. The Committee approved the audit.
- Legislative Program Coordinator Alexander Law provided an update to the Executive Committee on the low level of productivity from Congress since his last update, future responsibilities they have for passage of appropriations bills and thanked the Commissioners for their engagement with him up on Capitol Hill.
- Mrs. Leach provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations. In October 2025, the Annual Meeting will be in Delaware; in 2026, Rhode Island; in 2027, South Carolina; in 2028, Massachusetts; in 2029, Pennsylvania and in 2030, Georgia.

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

Motions

Move to accept the FY24 Audit.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan on behalf of the Administrative Oversight Committee. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

BUSINESS SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (OCTOBER 23, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Business Session of the Commission met to review and consider approval of the 2025 Action Plan and re-elect the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair. The Commission approved the 2025 Action Plan, which guides the Commission's activities over the next year as they pertain to management, science, data collection, law enforcement, habitat conservation, outreach, and finance and administration. The 2025 Action Plan is available [here](#).

The Commission unanimously affirmed the appointment of Joseph Cimino (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection) as ASMFC Chair, and Dan McKiernan (Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries) as Vice-Chair for another year of service.

For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Executive Director, at rbeal@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to accept the 2025 Action Plan as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan on behalf of the Administrative Oversight Committee. Motion approved by consent.

Move to re-nominate Joe Cimino as Chair

Motion by Mr. Keliher on behalf of the Nominating Committee. Motion approved by consent.

Move to re-nominate Dan McKiernan as Vice-chair

Motion by Mr. Keliher on behalf of the Nominating Committee. Motion approved by consent.

SHAD AND RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 23, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Shad and River Herring Management Board met to consider updates to the river herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plans (SFMPs) for New Hampshire and Maine, including a proposal from New Hampshire to reopen their river herring fishery; and to consider updates to the American shad SFMPs for Massachusetts and Connecticut.

SFMPs for American shad and river herring are required for all states and jurisdictions that have a commercial fishery under Amendment 2 (river herring) and Amendment 3 (American shad) to the Shad and River Herring FMP. Plans are updated and reviewed by the Technical Committee every five years.

The river herring SFMP update from New Hampshire included updates to instantaneous mortality rates, standard error calculations for Visual Time Counts, and an added figure of a juvenile abundance index from the state's juvenile seine survey. Along with the updated SFMP, New Hampshire submitted a proposal to reopen the river herring fishery, which was closed in 2021 due to low spawning run counts in 2019 and 2020. With new passage estimates in the Exeter River, the Great Bay indicator Stock in New Hampshire has been above the fishery-independent target escapement level of 94,598 fish for the past four years. With the exception of the Cocheco River, the proposal requested to open the state fishery for the upcoming 2025 fishing season, which is one year earlier than the recommended five-year closure, as stated in the [Technical Guidance on the Implementation of Amendments 2 and 3 to the Shad and River Herring Fishery Management Plan](#). The proposal states that the reasons for the low spawning run counts in 2019 and 2020 were primarily driven by errors in counting, rather than true declines in river herring abundance. Specifically, New Hampshire notes that there were issues with quantifying river herring in both the Cocheco and Exeter Rivers. In the Cocheco River, equipment failure and fishway modifications led to a loss of efficiency and inaccurate electronic fish counting. In the Exeter River, the majority of river herring are utilizing restored spawning habitat between the former Great Dam and Pickpocket Dam and not accessing the habitat above Pickpocket Dam fishway, where the new electronic counting station was installed after the Great Dam removal. The Board approved the presented SFMP and proposal to reopen the fishery.

The updated Maine SFMP for river herring included the addition of five additional commercial fisheries: Sewall Pond, Wights Pond, Chemo Pond, Pennamaquan Lake, and Pushaw Lake. The plan

also includes updated fishery independent surveys; a recalculated 25th percentile metric; updated Z estimates from the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment; and an added age range requirement, all of which are to be used as management triggers. Of the five new commercial fisheries that were requested to be opened, Sewall and Wights Pond were provisional fisheries approved from 2019-2024, Chemo Pond and Pushaw Lake were added due to significant improvements as a result of restoration efforts, and Pennamaquan Lake previously supported a fishery prior to the moratorium in 2012. The Board approved the presented SFMP.

Massachusetts and Connecticut submitted updated SFMPs for American shad. In Massachusetts, the updated plan requested continued recreational harvest in the Merrimack and Connecticut Rivers under the previously approved sustainability metrics. The plan also includes the addition of a description of stocking efforts in the Taunton River. Over five million shad larvae have been stocked each year from 2022-2024 in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The SFMP update from Connecticut requested continued commercial and recreational harvest on the Connecticut River, in conjunction with Massachusetts, under the previously approved sustainability metrics. The Board approved both SFMPs as presented.

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

Motions

Move to approve the updated River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan and proposal to reopen the fishery from New Hampshire, as presented today.

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Move to approve the updated River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan from Maine, as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve the updated Shad Sustainable Fishery Management Plans from Connecticut and Massachusetts, as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

HABITAT COMMITTEE (OCTOBER 23 & 24, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The Habitat Committee discussed priority topics and ongoing initiatives. The Committee reviewed content and format options for the 2024 edition of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*, scheduled for release in December. The publication will feature an overview of ASMFC Habitat Committee's recent activities, including executive summaries of the Fish Habitats of Concern (FHOC) and Habitat Management Series (HMS): Acoustic Impacts documents, with a special focus on Atlantic Shell Recycling programs and state-by-state updates on recycling efforts.

The Committee also began developing the next issue of the HMS, focusing on best management practices and key elements of shell recycling initiatives along the Atlantic coast. To support this, a standardized questionnaire and survey tool for gathering information was introduced. A draft of the next HMS Shell Recycling issue is expected by May 2025 for review and approval at the ASMFC Spring Meeting. The Committee also announced new leadership roles, with Kate Wilke from The Nature Conservancy stepping into the role of Chair and Eric Schneider from Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management as Vice-Chair. Moving forward, the Committee aims to provide a thorough guidance document on Atlantic coastal shell recycling and continue expanding state-level contributions for the *2024 Habitat Hotline*.

For more information, please contact Simen Kaalstad, Habitat Committee Coordinator, at skaalstad@asmfc.org.

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 23, 2024)

Press Release

Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update Finds Resource Remains Overfished with a Less Than 50% Chance of Rebuilding by 2029 Board to Meet in December to Consider Changing Measures for 2025 to Increase Probability of Rebuilding the Stock

Annapolis, MD – The Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board reviewed the results of the 2024 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, which indicates the resource is not experiencing overfishing but remains overfished relative to the updated biological reference points. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2023 was estimated at 191 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold of 197 million pounds and below the SSB target of 247 million pounds. Total fishing mortality in 2023 was estimated at 0.18, which is below the fishing mortality threshold of 0.21 and above the fishing mortality target of 0.17. The 2024 Assessment Update included data through 2023 and used the same model from the approved peer-reviewed 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment. The model structure was the same as the 2022 Stock Assessment Update, which accounted for the period of low recruitment the stock is experiencing and for new management changes starting in 2020.

The Board continued to express concerns about low recruitment and the lack of strong year-classes to support the stock and the fishery. Six of the last seven year-classes since 2015 have been below average, with only the 2018 year-class being above average. The 2018 year-class is starting to grow into the slot limit for the ocean recreational fishery and will become more available to ocean harvest in 2025.

The 2024 Assessment Update also included short-term projections to determine the probability of SSB being at or above the SSB target by 2029, which is the stock rebuilding deadline. The model structure for projections from 2024-forward was modified to explicitly account for the narrower slot limits implemented in 2023 and 2024. A range of projection scenarios were considered to explore two primary sources of uncertainty for the rebuilding trajectory through 2029: the level of

fishery removals for the current, in-progress 2024 fishing year and the fishing mortality rate from 2025 through 2029.

The Board agreed with the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee that the most likely projection scenario is lower removals in 2024 compared to 2022 and 2023, followed by an increase in

fishing mortality in 2025, and a subsequent decrease and stabilization of fishing mortality from 2026 through 2029. A decrease in removals for 2024 is projected based on preliminary low 2024 catch data, likely due to the strong 2015 year-class growing out of the current recreational ocean slot limit and the implementation of Addendum II measures to reduce fishing mortality in 2024. An increase in 2025 fishing mortality would correspond to the 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit, and the subsequent decrease and stabilization from 2026 through 2029 would align with the 2018 year-class growing out of the slot limit and the lack of strong year-classes behind it. In this scenario, the probability of rebuilding by 2029 is less than 50%.

Based on these projections, the Board will hold a special Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board action to change 2025 management measures to reduce fishing mortality and increase the probability of rebuilding to at least 50%. Under Addendum II to Amendment 7, the Board can change management measures through Board action, instead of developing an addendum, if the stock assessment indicates a less than 50% probability of the stock rebuilding by 2029. Ahead of the December meeting, the Board tasked the Technical Committee with updating the projections based on additional 2024 catch data and developing recreational size limit and seasonal closure management options for consideration.

A subsequent press release will provide details on the meeting date and format (in-person or virtual), and the anticipated timeline for the availability of meeting materials and the public input process (which may differ from the standard public comment timelines to allow for the compilation and summary of public comment in advance of the meeting).

The 2024 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update will be available at <https://asmfc.org/species/atlantic-stripped-bass> under stock assessment reports early next week. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR24-32

Motions

Main Motion

Move to schedule a special Striped Bass Management Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board Action in response to the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The Board will consider action to revise the 2025 recreational seasons and or size limits and 2025 commercial quotas to achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the “low 2024 removals with F increase in 2025 only” projection.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Gary.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to initiate an addendum to address reducing total removals (harvest and discard mortality/recreational and commercial) in the coastwide striped bass fishery using the technical committee’s most likely projection scenario (F2024=Low Removals, F Increases in 2025 Only and Returns to 2024 Low Levels) and a 50% probability of achieving the spawning stock biomass (SSB) target level by 2029. The intent of this addendum is to provide the Board with coastwide and regional alternatives for the recreational and commercial fishery for implementation on January 1, 2026.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion fails (6 in favor, 9 opposed, 1 abstention).

Main Motion

Move to schedule a special Striped Bass Management Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board Action in response to the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The Board will consider action to revise the 2025 recreational seasons and or size limits and 2025 commercial quotas to achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the “low 2024 removals with F increase in 2025 only” projection.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Gary.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to schedule a special Striped Bass Management Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board Action in response to the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The Board MAY consider action to revise the 2025 recreational seasons and/or size limits and 2026 commercial measures via board action. The Board could also consider recreational or commercial measures with an addendum for 2026 and beyond to achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the low 2024 removals with F increase in 2025 only projection.

Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion fails (7 in favor, 7 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to schedule a special Striped Bass Management Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board Action in response to the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The Board will consider action to revise the 2025 recreational seasons and or size limits and 2025 commercial quotas to achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the “low 2024 removals with F increase in 2025 only” projection.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Gary.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to change “commercial quotas” to “commercial measures.”

Motion made by Mr. Clark seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion fails for lack of majority (8 in favor, 8 opposed).

Main Motion

Move to schedule a special Striped Bass Management Board meeting in December 2024 to consider Board Action in response to the 2024 Stock Assessment Update. The Board will consider action to revise the 2025 recreational seasons and or size limits and 2025 commercial quotas to

achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the “low 2024 removals with F increase in 2025 only” projection.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes (14 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 null).

SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (OCTOBER 24, 2024)

Press Release

Spiny Dogfish Board Approves Draft Addendum VII for Public Comment to Consider Action to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch Board Revises 2024/2025 Fishing Year Commercial Quota to 10.25 Million Pounds

Annapolis, MD – The Commission’s Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Draft Addendum VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Spiny Dogfish for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers potential measures to maintain consistency with the federal Fishery Management Plan in response to the [proposed rule](#) to implement Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6.

The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils developed Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6 in response to a 2021 Biological Opinion and 2022 Action Plan that called for reducing bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon in spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries. The coastwide Atlantic sturgeon population is made up of five distinct population segments, all of which are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and Atlantic sturgeon harvest has been under a coastwide moratorium in federal and state waters since 1998. The Commission’s Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic sturgeon maintains the moratorium through at least 2038, and while [the 2024 stock assessment update](#) showed signs of improvement, the stock remains depleted coastwide.

The Board initiated Draft Addendum VII in August 2024 after the Councils recommended measures to NOAA Fisheries to prohibit overnight soaks for federal spiny dogfish permit holders on gillnets with 5”-10” mesh in November and May for a certain area of state and federal waters off of New Jersey, as well as for gillnets of 5.25”-10” mesh in November through March in specified areas off of Maryland and Virginia. The options in the Draft Addendum aim to establish equivalent overnight soak restrictions for spiny dogfish harvesters in state waters that do not possess a federal spiny dogfish permit.

The Draft Addendum will be posted to the website next week at <http://www.asmfc.org/about-us/public-input>. A subsequent press release will provide details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in February at the Commission’s Winter Meeting.

The Board also revised the commercial quota for the 2024/2025 fishing from 11,331,747 to 10,249,260 pounds to be consistent with the federal quota. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve Draft Addendum VII for Public Comment, as amended today.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion accepted by unanimous consent.

Move to amend the spiny dogfish commercial quota to 10,249,260 pounds for the 2024/2025 fishing year.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion accepted without opposition.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISFMP) POLICY BOARD & MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (OCTOBER 24, 2024)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive a report from the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee meeting summary); a progress report on the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) work on an industry-based survey (IBS); review committee reports from the Law Enforcement, Habitat Committee and Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Steering Committee (see meeting summaries of all 3 groups); consider a letter request from the American Lobster Management Board; receive a report from Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) on fish kills in the wind energy area off of Virginia; and consider the Recreational Measures Setting Process Draft Addenda/Framework for public comment with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council).

Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel Report

NTAP has made progress since the last update to the Commission in May. Its meetings have been focused on the IBS. The IBS survey is not part of the contingency plan for the R/V Bigelow, instead it will be a new data source that will be able to reach areas the R/V Bigelow cannot. The R/V Bigelow contingency plan should be out within the month and will be presented by NOAA Fisheries. The IBS is still under development and had not been funded. The Senate budget had funding language but the House budget did not. Survey work would not start until a new budget year that is not part of a continuing resolution. There are three long term objectives for the IBS: (1) improve resource assessments by providing indices of abundance complementary to the bottom trawl survey, (2) sample areas that cannot be sampled by the bottom trawl survey, and (3) add resiliency to the survey data stream. The pilot survey period last two years. Phase one will begin spring 2025 and include a five-day survey to focus on standardizing procedures. It is estimated this phase will cost around \$300,000. The F/V Darana R will be used for the pilot and will occur in and around the wind energy area off of Virginia. The funding is expected to come from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The operation will be focused on the fishing versus the biosampling component. A draft operating procedures manual is expected by spring 2025. Phases two and three will begin in the fall of 2025 at an estimated cost of approximately \$3 million. These phases will be focusing on vessel requirements, operational feasibility of day and night sampling, and maneuvering wind areas. These phases will expand on what is learned during phase one, use multiple vessels, increase the special and temporal footprint, and test the survey design that will be drafted. If funding is acquired and the pilot is successful, a new survey would begin in 2027.

Lobster Letter

At the recommendation of the American Lobster Management Board, the Policy Board agreed to send a letter to Canada Division of Fisheries and Oceans to encourage the continued collaboration between Canada and US on lobster science, particularly as the US is working on the lobster benchmark stock assessment.

BOEM Report

Brian Hooker with BOEM provided a presentation on recent fish kills around the wind energy areas off of Virginia. The incidents began in May 2024 and mostly consist of Atlantic croaker but also include spot. BOEM has robust information of pile-driving impacts to fish in areas that are close to turbine foundations. Therefore, it is anticipated there could be fish injury or mortality events associated with construction work and is included in construction permits. The fish kills were reported by staff observing the construction work for impacts to protected species and marine mammals. Thirty-nine observations at 24 foundation locations have occurred with an average of 450 dead fish per observations. Some of the observations occurred when construction was not occurring. Double bubble curtains are put in place up to a few days before construction to mitigate the amount of sound that transfers during the piling. Fish kill observations were seen near the pile, outside the bubble curtain and between the two. There is not a definitive determination of the cause of the fish death, some fish have damaged air bladders but other fish have broken necks and vertebrae. BOEM's working hypothesis is that a combination of the piling and bubble curtains is impacting the fish. BOEM is working on potential protocols that can be undertaken do to minimize these fish kills. These observations are within the mortality amounts seen in typical fisheries bycatch.

Joint Meeting of the Policy Board and Council: Recreational Measures Setting Process Draft Addenda/Framework

The Policy Board was then joined by the Council for a joint meeting to review the range of options presented in the Recreational Measures Setting Process Draft Addenda/Framework. The draft addenda/framework consider changes to the process used by the Commission and the Council to set recreational management measures (bag, size, and season limits) for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The option that is ultimately selected by the Policy Board and Council is intended replace the currently used Percent Change Approach implemented through the Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda, which will sunset at the end of 2025. Key differences between the five options in the draft addenda include the information considered when setting measures and the circumstances under which measures would change.

The Policy Board approved the draft addenda for public comment, with public hearings to take place in the coming months. The Commission will distribute a press release on the draft addendum's availability and public hearing schedule once the hearing details have been finalized.

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

Motions Board

Move to approve Draft Addendum XXXVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP and Draft Addendum III to the Bluefish FMP for public comment as modified today.

Council

Move to approve the range of options in the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda as modified today.

Motions made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motions approved by unanimous consent.

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD & MAFMC (OCTOBER 24, 2024)

Press Release

ASMFC and MAFMC Approve Changes to Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Size Exemptions

Annapolis, MD – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have jointly approved modifications to two exemptions from the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements. The Board adopted these changes through Addendum XXXV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, and the Council recommended identical measures through a framework action which will be submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and implementation.

Current regulations for the summer flounder trawl fishery require a minimum mesh size of 5.5-inch diamond mesh or 6.0-inch square mesh to retain more than 200 pounds of summer flounder from November through April, or 100 pounds of summer flounder from May through October. The Small Mesh Exemption Program provides an exemption from these requirements for authorized vessels fishing in a designated area from November 1 through April 30. This exemption is designed to allow vessels to retain some bycatch of summer flounder while operating in other small-mesh fisheries. Through this action, the Board and Council agreed to expand the exemption area by moving the boundary of the northern portion of the area approximately five miles west, then connecting the western boundary to the southern scup Gear Restricted Area. While this has the appearance of notably increasing the size of the exemption area, a large portion of the area overlaps with the Frank R. Lautenberg deep sea coral zone, where bottom tending gear is already prohibited. The intent of this change is to increase economic opportunities for industry while continuing to protect the summer flounder stock and prevent regulatory discards.

The Board and Council also voted to implement a tiered monitoring approach for the Small Mesh Exemption Program. Current regulations allow the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Regional Administrator to terminate the program for the remainder of the season if vessels fishing under the exemption are discarding on average more than 10%, by weight, of their entire catch of summer flounder per trip. Under the new tiered monitoring approach, the discard trigger will be increased to 25%, and once the trigger is reached, a more detailed review of discards will be conducted to determine whether the exemption should be rescinded. The intent of this review is to allow for a more comprehensive consideration of the drivers of, and appropriate response to, discards.

Finally, the Board and Council approved a revised definition of the term “flynet” as it relates to the flynet exemption from the summer flounder commercial minimum mesh size requirements. The revised definition encompasses similar high-rise net types which have very large mesh in the wings, with mesh size decreasing through the body of the net. These nets are not designed to catch flatfish and generally catch small amounts of summer flounder.

Addendum XXXV, including the map showing the approved boundaries, will be posted at <https://asmfc.org/species/summer-flounder> under Management Plans and FMP Reviews once the map is finalized. Updates on the Council’s framework will be posted at <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-commercial-mesh-exemptions>.

For more information, please contact either Chelsea Tuohy, ASMFC Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at ctuohy@asmfc.org or Kiley Dancy, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, at kdancy@mafmc.org.

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Motions

Board and Council

Move to adopt in Section 3.1, Option B Expanded Small Mesh Exemption Program Exemption Area, in Section 3.2, Option C Tiered Discard Monitoring Approach, and in Section 3.3, Option B Modified Flynet Definition.

Board motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Council motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Board

Move to approve Addendum XXXV to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The effective date of any FMP modifications would be consistent with the effective date published in the final rule in the Federal Register or November 1, 2025 whichever is sooner.

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion approved by consent with one abstention. Roll Call: in favor - NC, VA, PRFC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, CT, MA; abstention – NOAA.

Council

Move to submit the Summer Flounder Commercial Mesh Size Exemptions Framework with preferred alternatives as identified today to NMFS.

Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (NOAA).