



**MARINE FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING AMENDED AGENDA**

9:00AM

April 24, 2025

**26 Evergreen Street
Kingston, MA 02364**

1. Call to Order and Routine Business (9:00 – 9:15)
 - a. Introductions and Announcements
 - b. Review of Approval 2025 Business Meeting Agenda
 - c. Review and Approval of March 2025 Draft Business Meeting Minutes
2. Agency Updates (9:15 – 9:45)
 - a. Office of Law Enforcement: Personnel, Recent Operations & Marine Fishery Incidents
 - b. Department of Fish and Game: Recent Meetings and Events and Department-wide Activities and Projects
 - c. Division of Marine Fisheries: Personnel, Recent Meetings and Events, and Agency Activities and Projects
3. Action Items (9:45 – 10:00)
 - a. Refinement to Final Bait Deployment Recommendation
4. Emergency Rule Making (10:00 – 10:30)
 - a. Implementing Addendum 32 to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan
5. Discussion Items and Updates (10:30 – 11:30)
 - a. Decision on Commercial Striped Bass Management Proposal
 - b. Interstate Fishery Management
 - c. Federal Fishery Management
 - d. Massachusetts Commercial Fisheries Commission
6. Presentation on DMF's Eel Grass Restoration Work (11:30 – 12:00)
7. Other Business and Public Comment (12:00 – 12:15)
8. Adjourn (12:15)

All times provided are approximate and the meeting agenda is subject to change. The MFAC may amend the agenda at the start of the business meeting.

Future Meeting Dates

May 29, 2025 – SMAST East, New Bedford

MARINE FISHERIES ADVISORY COMMISSION
Draft Business Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2025
via Zoom

In attendance:

Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission: Raymond Kane, Chairman; Bill Doyle, Vice Chair; Shelley Edmundson, Clerk; Arthur “Sooky” Sawyer; Bill Amaru; Tim Brady; and Chris McGuire. Absent: Kalil Boghdan.

Division of Marine Fisheries: Daniel McKiernan, Director; Bob Glenn, Deputy Director; Story Reed, Deputy Director; Kevin Creighton, Assistant Director; Nichola Meserve; Melanie Griffin; Bradlie Morgan; Jared Silva; Derek Perry; Tracy Pugh; Kelly Whitmore; Steve Wilcox; Ben Gahagan; Brad Schondelmeier; Erin Burke; Ashley Peach Bueche; Nick Buchan; Kristen Thiebault; George Davis; Kim Lundy; Greg Skomal; Cara Litos; Anna Webb; Erich Druskat; Matt Ayer; Matt Duggan; Luke Putaansuu; and Scott Schaffer;

Department of Fish and Game: Tom O’Shea, Commissioner; Sefatia Romeo-Theken, Deputy Commissioner

Massachusetts Environmental Police: Lt. Col. Chris Baker; Lt. Matt Bass

Members of the Public: Alvin; Andrew Danikas; Anthony Friedrich; Patrick; Beth Casoni; Bill; Bill Fiora; Blane Chocklett; Brendan; Brett Stone; Brian; Brian Denker; Brian Kelly; Chris Killenberg; Craig Cantelmo; Cynthia Wigren; Dana; Daniel Murphy; David; Doherty; Eric Holet; Franky; George; Jeff; Joe; Kieth Santorelli; Kevin; Kurt; Manuela Barrett; Michael; Michael Pierdinock; Michael Waine; Mike Abdow; Mike Hogan; Nick Jones; Megan Hopwood; Parker Mauck; Paul Gerard Caruso; Paul Woodard; Peter Jenkins; Rick; Ray; Robert Porter; Sam Pickard; Stephen Smith; Steve Volpe; Todd Boothroyd; Todd MacGregor; Tyler; Willy Hatch

INTRODUCTIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Raymond Kane called the March 27, 2025 Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC) business meeting to order.

Jared Silva conducted roll call attendance. Kalil Boghdan was absent, all other Commission members were present.

REVIEW OF JANUARY 23, 2025 BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

Chairman Kane asked if the March 2025 MFAC business meeting agenda needed to be adjusted. No requests were made.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 17, 2024 DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Kane asked for edits to the January 23, 2025 business meeting minutes. Bill Amaru requested the attendance be adjusted to show that he was present. Jared Silva noted he would make this edit.

The Chair called for a motion. Bill Amaru moved to approve the draft minutes as amended. Bill Doyle seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Chairman Kane abstaining (6-0-1).

OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT: PERSONNEL, RECENT OPERATIONS, & MARINE FISHERY INCIDENTS

Lt. Matt Bass provided a personnel update for the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP). There were three recent new hires, and with several pending retirements, Colonel Mason requested 12 additional new hires for this upcoming fall. Lt. Bass then pivoted to discuss right whale management. Recent aerial surveys observed 45 whales in Cape Cod Bay and Massachusetts Bay the week prior. MEP's joint effort with DMF to seasonally remove gear from the Large Whale Closure was progressing smoothly. Lastly, Lt. Bass discussed a recent lobster violation involving an offshore dragger landing in Provincetown where \$11,000 worth of product was seized, and a \$7,000 citation was issued.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME: RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS AND DEPARTMENT-WIDE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Tom O'Shea thanked MEP for their work to address right whale conservation. The Environmental Bond Bill, which is moving forward this spring, should include provisions for marine habitat restoration and improved access to shore-based fishing. The Commissioner was also hopeful that the Commonwealth's Capital Investment Plan will expand funding opportunities for marine habitat restoration and access over the next two years.

Commissioner O'Shea attended the Seafood Expo with EOEEA Secretary Tepper, Director McKiernan, and DMF staff. Tom and Secretary Tepper met with a Norwegian delegate and the conversation revealed similar challenges abroad to those faced locally concerning offshore wind development and groundfish stocks.

The Commissioner discussed the Department's efforts to stand up the Commercial Fisheries Commission (CFC). The CFC was established by the legislature to serve as a forum to address high-level issues affecting commercial fisheries and to develop strategies to advocate on behalf of the commercial fishing and seafood industry. DMF Director McKiernan and Alison Brizius, the Director of Office of Coastal Zone Management are the co-chairs of the CFC.

The Department was in the process of finalizing its report on the biodiversity conservation goals for the Commonwealth. This report has been presented to EOEEA and the Governor's Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience. EOEEA Secretary Tepper will be

forwarding the report along to the Governor's office for their review.

Lastly, the Commissioner acknowledged that changes in the administration of the federal government had created substantial uncertainty and effects the state and federal management of the Commonwealth's fisheries. He was working with Director McKiernan to address these issues. Additionally, there are concerns about how the loss of federal funds may impact the state budget and state programs moving forward.

Chairman Kane requested DMF provide a future presentation on its eelgrass restoration. Deputy Director Bob Glenn indicated he would reach out to Habitat Program Lead Mark Rousseau and Dr. Forrest Schneck.

DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES: PERSONNEL, RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS, AND AGENCY ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Director Dan McKiernan echoed Commissioner Tom O'Shea's concerns about the operational capacity of the federal government and noted his frustration with FDA's inability to engage and attend the upcoming regional meeting of the Northeast Shellfish Sanitation Association.

McKiernan also discussed efforts to stand up the Commercial Fisheries Commission and outlined the membership and purpose of the public body as set forth in its enabling legislation. He noted that the interests of the CFC would likely intersect with a variety of existing public bodies, including the MFAC, and as co-chair he will work to limit overlaps and redundancies. The CFC's inaugural meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8 in Boston.

The Director then moved on to discuss personnel. He introduced Bradlie Morgan, the agency's new Communications and Policy Administration specialist. Bradlie will be working under Jared Silva and assisting in the administration of public body meetings, including the MFAC. Additionally, DMF has hired Sean Terrill, as a shellfish restoration specialist, and Ashley (Peach) Buke, as a Dive Safety Instructor.

McKiernan briefed the MFAC on two DMF video projects. The first is a series by DMF's Recreational Fishing Program to educate anglers on striped bass handling techniques. The second, is a series by DMF's Seafood Marketing Program to promote flatfish. On the subject of seafood marketing, Dan briefly discussed the recent Seafood Expo highlighting the promotion of local fish products.

With the horseshoe crab spawning season on the horizon, DMF wrote to the Town of Wareham to address their beach grooming practices. Specifically, DMF noted poor survey trends on Wareham's Swifts Beach and requested the town delay grooming activities until after the spawning season to eliminate disruption that may negatively impact spawning.

Director McKiernan finally thanked the MFAC members for taking the time to review and consider the extensive documents provided for the March business meeting. He recognized the burden the current regulatory process places on the MFAC particularly as it relates to making important regulatory decisions for the upcoming fishing year

immediately on the heels of the public input process.

Bill Amaru raised issues regarding the depressed ex-vessel value for flatfish, particularly yellowtail flounder. Bill Doyle argued that improved labeling standards for seafood could enhance the value of local caught product. Commissioner O'Shea noted that an electronic seafood auctioning company in New Bedford and Gloucester may generate more competitive pricing for fish. McKiernan referred this issue to Deputy Director Story Reed who oversees the Seafood Marketing Program.

Sooky Sawyer raised concerns among the lobster industry that PETA would again be placing advertisements on Steamship Authority vessels targeting the fishery and alleging they are responsible for killing whales. McKiernan reminded the MFAC that PETA placed such an advertisement on a ferry last year. DMF brought concerns about the advertisement to the Steamship Authority's attention and bought advertising space in the form of QR codes on tables that linked to a DMF video promoting the Massachusetts' lobster industry. The Steamship Authority eventually moved forward with a temporary advertisement suspension, which was lifted in December 2024. Dan was uncertain if PETA, or other organizations, would seek to place similar advertisements in the future. Sooky argued the Commonwealth should preemptively address the lobster industry's concerns with the Steamship Authority to avoid finding itself in a responsive posture. He also noted that the Governor commented in opposition to a federal speed limit rule that would have negatively impacted the ferry industry along the South Cape. Shelley Edmundson noted that the Steamship Authority advertising decision will allow for 25% of their advertisements to be dedicated to non-profit organizations using a lottery system. Commissioner O'Shea and Director McKiernan committed to working with the lobster industry to address concerns should they arise but were skeptical about the state's ability to act preemptively.

Chris McGuire thanked DMF for recording the recent public hearings and distributing these recordings to MFAC members. He was unable to attend the hearings but was able to listen to the recordings and hear the public testimony received in Gloucester and Buzzards Bay. Jared Silva noted that these public hearings provided DMF with an opportunity to pilot new recording technology that may enable DMF to provide a real-time listen-in option for all future public hearings and public meetings.

ACTION ITEMS

Jared Silva provided a statement on how the MFAC would proceed with the 11 regulatory recommendations on the agenda. In summary: (1) DMF will present on an a recommendation; (2) Commission members will be afforded an opportunity to ask clarifying questions of DMF; (3) the Chairman will seek a motion and a second on DMF's recommendation; (4) MFAC members and DMF may debate and deliberate on the motion; and (5) the Chairman may conclude deliberation by calling for a roll call vote. If a motion is not made in support of a recommendation; the Director anticipates a recommended motion will fail; or the recommended motion is voted down, the Director may pull the recommendation or offer a substitute recommendation for the MFAC's consideration. If a substitute recommendation is provided by the Director, it will follow the same process.

Consistent with the MFAC's typical protocol, public comment would not be accommodated until the conclusion of the meeting so as not to bias the deliberative process.

Striped Bass Total Length Management

Director McKiernan presented DMF's recommendation to require commercial and recreational anglers squeeze the tail of a striped bass when conducting a total length measurement. At present, DMF regulations allow for either squeezing or fanning the tail. This issue came to light during a fishing tournament this summer. DMF's Recreational Fishing Program investigated various measurement techniques and found that pinching the tail can add approximately 0.3" to a fish's total length while forcibly fanning the tail can reduce a fish's total length by 1.4". Therefore, the manipulation of the tail can turn a 3-inch slot limit into a near 5" slot limit, primarily by reducing fish length by tail fanning. This impedes the effectiveness of the slot limit, and given the public interest in protecting larger fish from harvest, DMF recommended requiring the upper and lower tail forks be squeezed when measuring for total length. DMF also intended to recommend the ASMFC's Striped Bass Board make this a coastwide requirement.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Shelley Edmundson made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation on striped bass total length measurement as provided. Sooky Sawyer seconded the motion.**

There was no deliberation. **The Chair called the vote, and the motion passed unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Commercial Menhaden Management

Nichola Meserve introduced the menhaden trip limit recommendation to revise the quota-use trigger that reduces the limited entry fishery's trip limit from 25,000 lbs to 6,000 lbs. Currently, this occurs if 90% of the quota is taken before September 1; the recommendation would have it occur should 98% of the quota be taken before September 1. Nichola provided some background information on the current trigger and noted that 10% of the existing quota resulted in a set aside that is too large for the small-scale fishery to utilize and could prevent Massachusetts from taking the full quota and potentially participating in the Episodic Event Set Aside (EESA). DMF's recommendation responded to industry's interest in accessing the EESA while also allowing for a small-scale fishery to provide bait to the local lobster industry later in the season. Nichola added that DMF could also continue to seek quota transfers from other states, if appropriate.

DMF was also moving forward two permitting actions that did not require MFAC approval. Nichola explained the first action would limit renewals of the Menhaden Endorsement in 2026 to only those who had at least one landing of at least 6,000 pounds from January 1, 2014 through the August 1, 2023 control date or hold the Menhaden Endorsement in conjunction with a Fish Weir Endorsement. DMF projected this action will reduce the number of Menhaden Endorsements issued from 51 in 2024 to as few as 13 in 2026. This responded to industry concerns that regional demand for bait could result in the activation of latent effort in the limited entry fishery that would negatively impact season length, market price, profitability, and increase user group conflicts. The second permitting action was to amend the control date language for the Coastal Access Permit – Purse Seine

Endorsement, which effectively authorizes participation in the small-scale open access menhaden fishery. The revised control date language will allow DMF to limit entry in the future based on certain activity criteria, not just date of permit issuance. DMF was not moving forward on the proposal to limit access to this endorsement given public comment supporting maintaining an open access small-scale fishery to provide entry level opportunities and meet local bait demand.

Lastly, Nichola explained that DMF would initiate a Pilot Program in 2025 to allow similarly permitted vessels rigged for seining to share their catch should a set exceed the trip limit ("slippage"). Nichola explained that the industry requested a program like that of Maine, which is meant to reduce the release of dead fish, user conflict, and time on the water.

Director McKiernan noted DMF met with the menhaden fishery in the fall to discuss fishery performance this past year, which led to the development of this recommendation. Dan also praised the policy team, specifically Nichola, for their efforts.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Sooky Sawyer made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation on menhaden trip limit triggers as provided. Bill Amaru seconded the motion.** The Chairman allowed for MFAC discussion.

Sooky expressed support for the recommendation, particularly the Pilot Program. He noted that it would reduce time on the water and the potential for slippage.

The Chair asked to clarify whether the Pilot Program applied to both the open entry and limited entry fleets. Nichola responded that open entry vessels can partner with other open entry vessels and limited entry vessels may partner with other limited entry vessels provided all vessels involved are rigged for seining.

There were no further comments. **The Chair called the motion to a vote and the motion passed unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Commercial Summer Flounder Management

Jared Silva provided an overview of commercial summer flounder management. He noted that the management program has been frequently amended in recent years in response to substantial changes in quota availability and varying fishery performance. In 2024, the fishery closed in late August, which prevented the inshore fishery from continuing into the early fall. In response, DMF took actions to constrain the Period I (January 1 – April 22) fishery for 2025, including an in-season adjustment to reduce the trip limit from 5,000 pounds to 2,000 pounds and the suspension of the multi-state program. In response, the wintertime fishery had only taken about 4% of the annual quota and DMF anticipated about 120,000 pounds would rollover to the Period II (April 22 – December 31) fishery. Jared expected this quota rollover would buffer against an early quota closure again this year.

Jared then detailed the six recommendations. There were two recommendations focused on the Period I fishery that were focused on slowing quota consumption and making additional quota available to the inshore summertime fishery when the fish is more

valuable to more permit holders. The first action was to adopt a 2,000-pound trip limit in regulation, thereby codifying the in-season adjustment taken for 2025. The second action was to reduce the Period I quota allocation from 30% to 15% overall. Jared noted that should these actions be approved, the Director may renew the Multi-State Program for 2026 to provide offshore vessels with greater opportunity to utilize their Period I quota allocation. For Period II, DMF was recommending to reduce the trip limits for net fishers from 600 pounds to 500 pounds and for hook fishers from 400 pounds to 325 pounds; eliminate Saturday as an open fishing day; amend the trigger to automatically reduce trip limits in-season so that it occurs if 75% of the annual quota is taken by August 15 rather than August 1; and adopt a subsequent trigger to reduce trip limits to 200 pounds for all gear types if 90% of the quota is taken before September 1.

Jared explained that these amendments were designed to keep the fishery profitable for a variety of participants; allow for quota utilization during the summer period when the ex-vessel value tends to be stronger; buffer against increasing effort in the fishery, particularly given concerns about the groundfish fishery; and preserve some quota into the early fall to allow continued directed hook fishing and a bycatch in the trawl fishery when other species are may be targeted.

Lastly, Jared spoke to DMF's renewal of the Consecutive Daily Trip Limit Program for 2025, which does not require an MFAC action. Jared explained that this program will allow trawlers to fish two consecutive calendar days, taking a day's limit on each day, and returning to port to land a double limit on the second day. This program was initiated in 2019 to allow the fleet to more efficiently pursue the quota and for dealers to service a variety of Cape Cod ports, which was in part driven by the loss of the buy boat that historically serviced Nantucket. Despite these benefits, the program is not universally supported given it attracts effort from larger-capacity offshore vessels resulting in more rapid quota use. Additionally, there are concerns that these vessels are high-grading and violating daily trip limit rules. Jared explained that DMF ultimately felt the benefits of the program outweigh the concerns raised. However, to address some of these concerns DMF would mandate participating vessels cannot offload within 24-hours of the start of the trip, and beginning in 2026, may require vessels install cellular-based electronic tracking devices. Additionally, the requirement that the first day's catch be stored in a discrete container sealed with a plastic single-use tag would be eliminated in favor of more simply segregating and labeling catch from day one from catch from day two.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Bill Doyle made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation for commercial summer flounder management. Bill Amaru seconded the motion.**

Bill Amaru voiced his support for the recommendations. However, he did not support DMF's continuation of the Multi-Day Program and was concerned about the potential influx of offshore groundfish draggers into the summer flounder fishery given anticipated low catch limits for codfish. He expected these factors would result in another late-summer quota closure and encouraged DMF to consider a more conservative approach. Jared stated that while Bill's concerns are shared, DMF opted not to take a more conservative approach given that this could constrain the fishery too much during the

summertime period when the fish are more valuable and negatively impact the profitability of the inshore fleet.

There were no further comments. **The Chair called the motion to a vote and the motion passed unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Commercial Groundfish Management

Jared Silva first outlined the commercial non-cod groundfish management recommendations. DMF sought to increase the yellowtail flounder from 350 pounds to 500 pounds and monkfish trip limit and from 536 pounds tail weight to 1000 pounds tail weight. This would provide the state water fleet with greater access to underutilized stocks given the reduced availability of cod. Jared explained that yellowtail flounder landings have trended downwards in recent years due to reduced participation which created room to increase the trip limit. The monkfish proposal was brought about after gillnetter Chris Chadwick argued the few remaining gillnet fishers could move away from cod to target monkfish in deeper areas of state waters.

Jared then introduced cod management recommendations. The first recommendation was to adopt the definitions for the Western Gulf of Maine (WGOM) and Southern New England (SNE) Cod Management Areas consistent with the boundaries set forth in Amendment 25 to the federal fishery management for multi-species groundfish. This will shift the boundary along the eastern facing shore of Cape Cod from Truro to the southern extent of Cape Cod and Nantucket at the 70th meridian. The second recommendation was to establish a moratorium on the retention and possession of SNE cod by all fishers and was meant to prevent any loopholes where a federally regulated vessel could land non-conforming fish. If there are delays between the state and federal regulations, federal permit holders could continue fishing under federal rules. Jared clarified that no changes would be made to the WGOM cod trip limit, which had initially been proposed due to fear of sub-component exceedance. However, DMF felt this was unlikely to occur due to attrition-driven declines in state waters WGOM cod landings and reduced inshore cod availability.

Lastly, DMF was moving to update the control date for the Groundfish Endorsement from December 31, 2018, to December 31, 2024. This would provide DMF would a more current control date should a future action be necessary to control the activation of latent effort.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Bill Doyle made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendations as provided. Shelley Edmundson seconded the motion.**

Bill Amaru expressed his support for the recommendations but noted that the whole approach to managing groundfish needed to be overhauled as it had failed the resource and the fishery for 40-years.

There were no further comments. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion passed unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Controls on Use of Conch Pots in Federal Zone

Dan McKiernan introduced DMF's recommendation to extend the state's conch pot management program into the federal zone. If approved, this would: (1) require any Massachusetts permit holder fishing conch pots in the federal waters and landing whelks in Massachusetts to hold a Conch Pot Endorsement from DMF; (2) require all conch pots fished by Massachusetts permit holders be tagged with a DMF-issued conch pot tag when on the water; (3) extend the 200 conch pot limit and April 15 – December 14 conch pot season to Massachusetts permit holders fishing conch pots in federal waters and landing whelks in Massachusetts. Dan explained that this is similar to how Maine manages its lobster fishery out into the federal zone and added this would ameliorate concerns about conch pot effort expanding into federal waters south and east of Nantucket, which presents a right whale entanglement risk.

The Chair asked how trap limits would be enforced in the EEZ. McKiernan responded that MEP would be able to enforce the trap limit through DMF-issued trap tags.

There were no further clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Shelley Edmundson made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation as provided. Tim Brady seconded the motion.**

There was no deliberation. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

False Albacore and Atlantic Bonito Catch Limits and Size Limits

Director McKiernan introduced the recommendation to adopt a 16" minimum size for false albacore and Atlantic bonito and a 5-fish per person possession limit for both species combined. These rules would apply to all harvest modes in state waters, except that fishers using mechanized mackerel jigs and fish weirs are exempt.

Dan explained that these fish are becoming increasingly available in our southern waters and are an important seasonal recreational fishery, particularly given reduced abundance and local availability of striped bass and bluefish. As a result, MRIP data has shown that recreational catch and harvest are increasing. Given there is no stock assessment for either species to inform appropriate fishing mortality rates and harvest limits, DMF was seeking to adopt some precautionary measures to constrain the development of a directed commercial fishery in Massachusetts and lock the recreational fishery into current retention practices.

Although these species are not managed at the interstate level through ASMFC, Dan anticipated that the other southern New England states would likely follow Massachusetts' lead and adopt similar limits.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Chris McGuire made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation as provided. Shelley Edmundson seconded the motion.**

Tim Brady objected to the recommendation as being arbitrary because there were no

stock assessments available to inform catch limits. Additionally, DMF was moving to adopt limits outside of the HMS and ICCAT management framework for these species.

Chris McGuire supported the recommendation. Referring back to Amaru's earlier comments about persistent challenges plaguing rebuilding groundfish, McGuire argued that adopting a precautionary management approach here could prevent a similar situation from developing with these species without any real economic consequences at present.

Shelley Edmundson and Bill Amaru also expressed their support for the recommendation. Bill Doyle and Sooky Sawyer suggested DMF could consider a higher possession limit to accommodate the use of these species as bait in the bluefin tuna fishery. McKiernan did not support amending his recommendation to accommodate this noting MRIP data trends and the fact that this rule would only apply in state waters.

Amaru questioned if DMF would consider hurdy gurdies and other similar devices as mechanized jigs. Silva noted that these gears would be included in the exemption, but rod and reel jigging would not.

The Chair asked to clarify if the five-fish limit is for each angler or vessel, and Dan confirmed it applied to each angler.

Chairman Kane asked Dan to bring this item to the attention of the ASMFC policy board and use his position as ASMFC Vice-Chair to encourage other states to adopt similar rules as soon as possible.

There were no further comments. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved 4-2-1 with Sooky Sawyer and Tim Brady opposing and the Chair abstaining.**

Restrictions Affecting Shore-Based Shark Fishing and Bait Deployment

Jared Silva first summarized the public comment received, noting that it influenced DMF to refine the final recommendation to better address activities to target white sharks and the resulting public safety challenges associated with targeting white sharks from shore.

DMF's resulting recommendation was multi-faceted. First, it sought to define shore-based shark fishing as the use of rod and reel gear from the shoreline, including wade fishing or any structure protruding from the shoreline, with a metal or wire leader that exceeds 18" in length attached to a hook with a gape greater than 5/8". Jared added that the hook gape rule created a clearer standard than the hook gauge rule proposed at public hearing. Then, "shore-based shark fishing" as defined would be prohibited along the coast of Cape Cod Bay beginning at the northernmost tip of Plymouth Point around Provincetown and down the backside of the Cape including Chatham Harbor and Monomoy Island. If approved, this prohibition would not extend to the coastline north of Plymouth Point, nor the state's southern coastline. Additionally, shore-based fishers could continue to use light gear (i.e., metal or wire leaders 18" or less or hooks with a gape 5/8" or less) when fishing along the shores of Cape Cod Bay and the Outer Cape. DMF also recommended

prohibiting chumming while “shore-based shark fishing” from sunrise to sunset throughout the Commonwealth. This would continue to allow anglers to use bait to attract other species when shore fishing, as is common when mackerel and pollock fishing from piers. Lastly, DMF recommended prohibiting the use of mechanized or remote-controlled devices to deploy bait with rod and reel gear. This targeted the use of devices, like drones and remote-controlled boats, and does not target kites or kayaks. Jared added that this was also meant to address the application of mechanized devices to target striped bass or other recreational fish, which could increase fight time and mortality.

Tim Brady asked if this recommendation sought to address beach safety. Jared Silva responded that the recommendation in part aimed to ameliorate emerging user group conflicts between beachgoers and a burgeoning constituency of anglers driven by social media who want to target white sharks. Silva relayed that DMF felt that growth of this shore-based white shark fishery was incompatible with other public uses of beaches and presented a significant public safety risk.

The Chair called for a motion. Bill Amaru made a motion to adopt the Director’s recommendation as provided. Shelley Edmundson seconded the motion.

Tim Brady expressed concern about this recommendation restricting beach fishing access to target other large shark species. Silva responded that the recommendation was designed to limit its effect on other shore-based fishing activities by being gear specific and he expected MEP would use discretion when determining if a violation were occurring. Lt. Bass stated that he has fished for sharks from shore and shared Brady’s concerns, particularly as it related to DMF’s initial public hearing proposal, but felt this final recommendation sufficiently addressed the issue. Senior DMF biologists Dr. Greg Skomal and Ben Gahagan added that DMF refined the final recommendation to better tailor the definition of shore-based shark fishing, the spatial extent of the prohibition, and framework around the chumming prohibition to more explicitly address concerns around targeting white sharks while working to limit constraints on other shore-based fishing activities.

There were no further comments. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved 5-1-1 with Tim Brady opposing and the Chair abstaining.**

Prohibition on Retention of Oceanic White Tip Sharks

Dan explained that this recommendation would match federal and interstate fishery management plans that establish zero retention of oceanic white tip sharks.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair moved for a motion. Bill Doyle made a motion to approve the Director’s recommendation as provided. Shelley Edmondson seconded the motion.**

There was no deliberation. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Prohibition on the Use of Lugworms as Bait

McKiernan explained that DMF sought to prohibit the use and sale of Pacific lugworms as

bait. The recommendation follows an action by Maine to similarly restrict this product due to biosecurity concerns, particularly related to the potential for disease transmission to crustaceans.

There were no clarifying questions. **Chairman Kane called for a motion. Sooky Sawyer made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation as provided. Bill Amaru seconded the motion.** Chairman Kane suggested the Director pursue a coastwide framework for addressing biosecurity concerns related to non-native baits through the ASMFC.

There was no further discussion. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Recreational Black Sea Bass Season

The Director explained that his recommendation would establish an open fishing season of May 17 – September 1, rather than May 18 – September 3 to maintain the Saturday opening, which is of importance to the for-hire fishery. By opening the fishery one calendar day earlier in May, the fishery will have to close two days earlier in September given lower harvest rates in the late summer and early fall as compared to the late spring and early summer.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Shelley Edmundson made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation as provided. Chris McGuire seconded the motion.**

Chairman Kane thanked DMF for their effort to open this fishery on the third Saturday of May each year.

There was no further discussion. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

Paperwork Requirements for the Possession and Sale of Dogfish Fins

Director McKiernan explained that this recommendation is designed to support the state law that prohibits the sale of shark fins. To accommodate the local seafood processing sector, the state law exempts fins taken from lawfully harvested and processed smooth and spiny dogfish. This in turn creates a potential loophole whereby shark fins may be marketed as smooth or spiny dogfish without any means of verification except expensive genetic testing. This rule would require fins marketed as smooth or spiny dogfish to be accompanied by paperwork documenting their lawful origin.

There were no clarifying questions. **The Chair called for a motion. Bill Amaru made a motion to adopt the Director's recommendation as provided. Bill Doyle seconded the motion.**

There was no deliberation. **The Chair called the motion for a vote. The motion was approved unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

FINAL REGULATORY ACTIONS

Commercial Eel Permitting

The Director explained that while reported eel catch in the state has declined, the issuance of eel endorsements has increased. To address this discrepancy and potential under-reporting, the final action creates a control date of December 31, 2024 and limits permit renewals in 2026 to those with at least one pound of eel landed since January 1, 2015. DMF would also make the eel endorsement owner-operator for 2026. The action would not constrain the use of eels as bait, for which people can possess up to 25.

Bill Amaru voiced support for this action and expressed concern about the decline of eel populations locally.

Chairman Kane asked about the rationale to establish the activity threshold at one pound of eels reported. Dan noted that it would be more accurate to say, “any documented landings”.

There were no further questions or comments.

Enhanced Mariner Reporting of Sea Turtle and Large Whale Entanglements

Deputy Director Bob Glenn stated that in DMF’s development of an Incidental Take Permit Application for right whales and sea turtles, NOAA Fisheries suggested adopting entanglement reporting requirements for all large whales and sea turtles. Current state rules only require the reporting of right whale entanglements. There was some public concern that this would lead to more entanglements being attributed to Massachusetts’ fishers and further harm our industry. However, Bob clarified that NOAA Fisheries does not attribute an entanglement to a specific fishery unless the source of the gear is verified. Accordingly, requiring entanglement reporting should not negatively impact our fisheries if entanglements with Massachusetts gear remain rare, and in fact, may reduce public scrutiny of our fisheries by encouraging disentanglement before the animals wash up onshore. Chris Maguire suggested increased outreach to help ensure mariners know where and how to report entanglements.

There were no further questions or comments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Federal Fisheries Management Update

In the interest of time, the Chair sought to delay this discussion until the April 2025 MFAC business meeting. **Bill Amaru made a motion to amend the March MFAC business meeting agenda to strike this time. Shelley Edmundson seconded the motion.** There was no discussion. **The Chair called the motion to a vote. The motion passed unanimously with the Chair abstaining (6-0-1).**

ASMFC Draft Lobster Addendum XXXII

Director McKiernan provided some history on the development and approval of Addendum XXVII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. This addendum implemented various gauge and escape vent changes to enhance spawning

stock biomass and other v-notch, gauge, and trap tag measures to achieve greater standardization among and within Lobster Conservation Management Areas. Under this addendum, state rules were to be implemented by July 1, 2025. However, in February 2025, the ASMFC initiated Addendum XXXII to repeal the gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII due to economic concerns raised by commercial fishers, particularly in Maine. The ASMFC has scheduled a virtual public hearing on Addendum XXXII for April 2025 and Dan expected the Board would approve the Addendum at its May meeting. As Massachusetts already implemented regulations to comply with Addendum XXVII, DMF will now have to move forward a new emergency regulatory package to adjust these regulations consistent with what the ASMFC approves in Addendum XXXII to ensure Massachusetts fishers are not managed more conservatively than those in other states.

Dan noted that Maine is currently holding industry meetings to discuss lobster conservation, which the ASMFC may want to consider pending the results of the upcoming stock assessment, which should be finalized later this year.

Sooky Sawyer noted that he supported the actions in Addendum XXXII to repeal the gauge and escape vent changes and DMF's pending emergency rules to ensure Massachusetts fishers are not more conservatively managed. However, Addendum XXXII failed to repeal the 1/8" v-notch standardization requirement for the Outer Cape Cod LCMA. Sooky argued that this unfairly targeted a small number of state-only permit holders in Massachusetts and the state delegation to ASMFC should work to rescind this measure. McKiernan reminded the MFAC that the Massachusetts delegation to the Board sought a motion to include a repeal of the Outer Cape Cod LCMA v-notch standardization measure in draft Addendum XXXII, but the motion did not receive a second.

OTHER BUSINESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Kane asked if any MFAC members wanted to raise issues for consideration at a future meeting. Dan noted that DMF would schedule presentation on eelgrass restoration at an upcoming meeting.

Chairman Kane requested that the August meeting be held on a Tuesday to account for traffic issues around Cape Cod entering the weekend and that the May and June MFAC meeting dates be finalized as soon as possible.

Sooky Sawyer raised concerns about the lack of dumpsters available to address marine debris clean-up. Bob Glenn and Jared Silva noted DMF intends to take this issue up as it develops state regulations to manage derelict gear removal.

The Chair moved onto public comment.

Beth Casoni apologized to Director McKiernan for potentially misunderstanding a conversation with the Director around the advertising decision made by the Steamship Authority. She also echoed Sooky's earlier suggestion to preemptively counter negative and inaccurate portrayals of the industry. To this point, Beth expressed interest in having the Lobster Foundation of Massachusetts apply for advertising space on the Steamship

Authority. Next, Beth noted that she would reach out to DMF with potential names for an industry working group to assist in guiding DMF's development of a permitting and regulatory framework for derelict gear removal. Beth also piggybacked on Sooky's comments regarding the need for dumpsters to handle marine debris clean up. Lastly, she thanked DMF for running the recent gear distribution event in Gloucester.

Brendan Adams and Sam Pickard, the President and Vice-President of the Outer Cape Lobstermen's Association, expressed their frustrations with the ASMFC process that resulted in a failure to include the repeal of the v-notch standardization requirement for the Outer Cape Cod LCMA in Addendum XXXII. They indicated the Outer Cape Lobstermen's Association was now considering legal action against both the ASMFC and DMF. Sam Pickard also expressed frustration that the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) was not convened during the development of Addendum XXVII nor Addendum XXXII and took issue with the scientific information used to support Addendum XXVII.

Jeff Souza, an Outer Cape lobsterman, agreed with the concerns raised by Brendan and Sam. Jeff also asked if DMF would renew the multi-day program for yellowtail and winter flounder. Jared Silva indicated that DMF would soon announce the renewal of this program and send out authorizations to applicants for the May 1 start of the upcoming fishing year.

Ray Jarvis, a fishing guide in Westport, and Anthony Friedrich, from the American Saltwater Guides Association, expressed support and appreciation for the adoption of DMF's recommended limits for Atlantic bonito and false albacore.

ADJOURNMENT

There were no further questions or comments. **The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Shelley Edmundson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Chirs McGuire. There was no opposition. The meeting was adjourned.**

MEETING DOCUMENTS

- March 27, 2025 MFAC Business Meeting Agenda
- January 23, 2025 MFAC Draft Business Meeting Minutes
- Striped Bass Total Length Management Recommendation
- Commercial Menhaden Management Recommendation
- Commercial Summer Flounder Management Recommendation
- State Waters Groundfish Management Recommendation
- Recommendation on Use of Conch Pots in Federal Waters
- Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore Size and Possession Limit Recommendation
- Shark and Shore-Based Fishing Recommendation
- Oceanic Whitetip Shark Retention Prohibition Recommendation
- Pacific Lugworm Bait Prohibition Recommendation
- Recreational Black Sea Bass Season Recommendation
- Dogfish Fin Paperwork Recommendation
- Commercial Eel Permitting Action
- Whale and Sea Turtle Entanglement Reproting Requirement
- Presentation on March 2025 Public Hearing Proposals and Final DMF Rules
- Presentation on Development of Lobster Addendum XXXII

UPCOMING MEETINGS

9AM
Thursday, April 24, 2025
Kingston Town Hall

9AM
Thursday, May 29, 2025
SMAST East



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lt. Governor


REBECCA L. TEPPER
Secretary

THOMAS O'SHEA
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

FROM: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

DATE: April 18, 2025

SUBJECT: **Further Refinements to Recommendation to Prohibit the Use of Devices to Deploy Baits When Rod and Reel Fishing from Shore**

Recommendation

In consideration of the rationale described below, I recommend the MFAC vote to approve the following clarification of last month's recommendation affecting the deployment of baits in rod and reel fisheries:

1. Prohibit the deployment of baited hooks by use of any motorized, compressed propulsion, or remote-controlled device when fishing with rod and reel gear from the shoreline, any structure affixed to the shore, or wade fishing.
2. This does not include kites or kayaks. Nor does it apply to power reels given these devices retrieve bait.

Background and Rationale

Following last month's MFAC business meeting, it has come to my attention that the recommendation¹ affecting the deployment of bait in rod and reel fisheries requires two minor modifications to ensure the intent and purpose are clear.

First, the scope of the rule needs to be limited to shore-based rod and reel fishing. Last month's recommendation was unclear as to whether the rule would apply to shore-based fishing only or all rod and reel fishing. Specifically, the memorandum states the following (emphasis added):

Prohibit the use of mechanized or remote-controlled devices to deploy baits when fishing from shore with rod and reel gear. This does not include casting or setting baits with non-mechanized devices such as kites or kayaks, nor the power or motor source of a vessel. Note this would apply broadly to all rod and reel fishing, not just shark fishing.

¹ Refer to page 270 of the March 2025 MFAC [meeting materials](#) for more details.

With this in consideration, I went back to the initial public hearing proposal memorandum to the MFAC² and the public hearing notice³. Both of these documents frame the proposal as relating to shore-based fishing. Given the unevenness of this final recommendation, I believe it is appropriate to clarify the final recommendation in the context of these earlier documents and have the prohibition apply to shore-based fishing only. Moreover, I question the need to apply this more broadly to vessel-based activity given the power of the vessel can be used to move the fishers closer to the resource thereby diminishing the need to use such devices.

Second, last month's recommendation addresses "mechanized or remote-controlled" bait deployment devices. The question has been posed as to whether mechanized covers compressed propulsion devices (e.g., bait cannons). In resolving this question, I am also referring to the initial proposal and public hearing notice. These documents both establish a broad proposal that sought to prohibit the use of any bait delivery system other than casting. The final recommendation then moves to narrow the scope of the rule to limit the use of "mechanized or remote-controlled devices" and only ponders allowances for "non-mechanized devices such as kites or kayaks". Accordingly, I think it is reasonable to infer that the final recommendation intended to be inclusive of propulsion devices like bait cannons, as well as drones and remote-controlled boats. However, I think it is appropriate to plainly make this clarification for the record.

² Refer to page 35 of the December 2024 MFAC [meeting materials](#) for more details.

³ Refer to page 3 of the February 14, 2025 [public hearing notice](#) for more details.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lt. Governor


REBECCA L. TEPPER
Secretary

THOMAS O'SHEA
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

FROM: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

DATE: April 18, 2025

SUBJECT: **Emergency Rule Making to Implement Addendum XXXII to the American Lobster Management Plan**

Status of Addendum XXXII to American Lobster Fishery Management Plan

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Lobster Board ("Board") initiated draft Addendum XXXII to the American Lobster Fishery Management Plan (FMP) at its February meeting. This addendum seeks to repeal the gauge and escape vent size measures approved in Addendum XXVII to the FMP (Table 1) given concerns raised by industry interests around potential economic impacts. The ASMFC held a virtual public hearing on Addendum XXXII on April 10, 2025 and I anticipate Addendum XXXII will be approved by the Board at their May 5, 2025 meeting.

Prior Regulatory Action and Need for Emergency Rules

In late 2024, Massachusetts adopted a suite of regulations to implement Addendum XXVII¹. This included establishing compliant regulations for the commercial fishery (Table 2) and extending complementary gauge size and escape vent rules to the recreational fishery in the Gulf of Maine and Outer Cape Management Areas (Table 3). Whereas the commercial rules go into effect on July 1², as required by Addendum XXVII, the recreational rule changes were scheduled to go into effect at the start of the season on May 15.

In anticipation of the Board approving Addendum XXXII, DMF has initiated emergency rule making. This should allow DMF to repeal those relevant aspects of our rules by May 15 for recreational fishers and July 1 for commercial fishers and seafood dealers. This is consistent with my long-held position that DMF will work to ensure Massachusetts' fishers (and by extension seafood dealers and consumers) should not end up subject to stricter standards than fishers who fish the same Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) (Figure 1).

¹ Refer to page 16 of the October 2024 MFAC [meeting materials](#) for more details

² With commercial fishery rules going into on July 1, complementary rules for seafood dealers were scheduled to become effective simultaneously at the point of primary transaction. However, seafood dealers were to be afforded a 90-day window when they could possess non-conforming product lawfully purchased prior to the July 1 implementation date to allow for the sell off of inventory.

Given the tight timeline with the recreational fishing season, DMF has notified recreational permit holders³ that they should expect that last year's rules will remain in place for 2025 (Table 4) and that the gauge and vent size amendments that were announced in December 2024 are no longer expected to go into effect. Formal notice will go out to commercial permit holders and seafood dealers once emergency rules are adopted and well in advance of the pending July 1 implementation date.

Once the emergency regulation is filed, DMF will have 90-days to hold a public comment period, public hearing, obtain MFAC approval, and file final rules with the Secretary of State. To meet these deadlines, I project that we will need to hold a short MFAC meeting in July to review and vote on a final recommendation. I anticipate this will be a short, virtual meeting to accommodate your various summertime schedules.

Background

Development and Implementation of Addendum XXVII

The most recent stock assessment for American lobster dates back to 2020. The assessment concluded that the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) lobster stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring. However, survey and landings trends indicate the GOM/GBK lobster stock population was declining from the preceding period which featured record high abundance and recruitment indices demonstrated the stock was also likely headed towards a period of lower productivity. Declining recruitment is thought to be environmentally driven related to changing seasonal availability of copepods which lobsters feed on during the larval stage.

This raised concerns through northern New England (Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts) about the long-term health of the resource and the fishery, particularly as more than 90% of lobster landings nationally come out of the Gulf of Maine. These concerns were particularly acute in Maine where officials feared the effect of declining landings and revenues across the state's maritime economy given its dependence on this resource. Consequently, there was interest at the ASMFC to get out ahead of expected declines and protect spawning stock biomass to buffer against environmental-driven changes in recruitment and productivity.

This resulted in the development of Addendum XXVII, which addressed management in the three LCMAs that fish on the GOM/GBK lobster stock—LMCA1, LCMA 3 (Offshore), and Outer Cape Cod (OCC) LCMA (Figure 1). This addendum featured two discrete components: (1) an index-based approach to track and respond to declining recruitment and trigger conservation measures designed to further protect spawning stock biomass; and (2) standardization measures to create more consistent rules within LCMA's to be adopted more immediately and irrespective of the trigger index.

To achieve the first feature of the addendum, ASMFC's Technical Committee (TC) for Lobster developed an index by blending data from ventless lobster trap surveys and state bottom trawl surveys as a mechanism to track abundance of recruit-sized (sub-legal) lobsters between stock

³ See DMF's April 11, 2025 [advisory](#).

assessments. This provided the Board with a mechanism to track and react to declining recruitment. This became the so-called “trigger index” whereby certain prescribed gauge size and escape vent mandates would occur gradually over a five-year period should a 35% decline in this index be observed from the 2016 – 2018 baseline.

The addendum also featured three discrete standardization measures. Historically, the management program for the OCCLCMA featured less restrictive maximum size and v-notch rules for state-only permit holders compared to those who also hold a federal permit. Specifically, the state-only permit holders were not subject to a maximum gauge size and had a v-notch standard of a sharp “v” not to exceed $\frac{1}{4}$ ” depth and without setal hairs, whereas federal permit holders were subject to a $6\frac{3}{4}$ ” maximum size and a v-notch standard of any indentation with a depth not to exceed $\frac{1}{8}$ ” with or without setal hairs. Considering the primary focus of the addendum was to take a precautionary management approach to enhance spawning stock biomass, standardization focused on adopting the more restrictive $6\frac{3}{4}$ ” maximum gauge size and $\frac{1}{8}$ ” v-notch rule across all participants (state-only permit holders and federal permit holders) in the OCCLCMA. The last standardization measure in the addendum prevented states (MA & NH) from automatically issuing additional (10%) trap tags to permit holders in LMCA 1 and LCMA 3 above their trap limit or trap allocation to preemptively account for in-season losses. This was intended to constrain permit holders from unlawfully fishing traps in excess of their trap limit or trap allocation and it would also bring the other states in the range into phase with what was already required in Maine.

The Board approved Addendum XXVII in May 2023⁴ for implementation by May 2024. The expectation was that the standardization measures would be effective for the implementation date and the trigger-based measures would be on the books to go into effect at some future date should the index decline by 35% compared to the baseline. However, within five months, the TC informed the Board that the index declined by 39% compared to the baseline triggering management changes for 2024.

The unexpected and immediate triggering of management caused a wave of concern across industry and government. There was worry that gauge manufacturers would be unable to timely fabricate new gauges for industry, enforcement, and recreational fishers throughout the range. Additionally, there was interest pursuing the Canadian fishery to adopt complementary measures in the Gulf of Maine⁵. Complementary measures would help resolve legal issues regarding the importation of undersized product from Canada to the United States and address anxieties in Downeast Maine about equity as Canadian and US vessels would be fishing side-by-side in the so-called “grey zone” but subject to disparate conservation standards. Accordingly, the Board voted twice to delay implementation. The first vote was in February 2024 and delayed implementation from May 1, 2024 to January 1, 2025. The second vote was in October 2024 and delayed implementation until July 1, 2025.

⁴ Note that Massachusetts delegation voted against Addendum XXVII due to concerns about the standardization measures affecting the state-only permit holders in OCCLCMAA.

⁵ Under Canadian rules, such a management action would have to be brought about by an industry petition because it was not mandatory conservation to respond to a stock assessment finding, which further complicated these negotiations.

In response, I proposed—and the MFAC approved—Massachusetts regulations to implement Addendum XXVII at its October 2024 business meeting. DMF’s regulations were filed on December 20, 2024 and codified on January 3, 2025⁶. Throughout the regulatory development and approval process, MFAC members questioned how DMF would act if other states (namely Maine) failed to implement Addendum XXVII. I responded that I would work through the ASMFC process but intended to avoid any scenario whereby Massachusetts’ fishers (and by extension seafood dealers and consumers) would end up subject to stricter standards than fishers who fish the same Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA). Additionally, I explained that should this occur, tight timelines for implementation would be likely and DMF would likely need to rely on emergency regulations to achieve this goal.

Unraveling of Support for Addendum XXVII

The scenario of noncompliance among our partner states came to fruition on January 9, 2025. Then Maine Commissioner Patrick Keliher announced he was “pulling the rule” to implement Addendum XXVII following two highly contentious public hearings where there was vitriolic outrage from some members of his industry towards Commissioner Keliher and his science and management staff regarding the pending minimum size increases and the perceived associated economic impacts. Video footage from a particularly out-of-control public hearing went viral on social media. Once word spread among the industry, newly elected New Hampshire Governor Kelly Ayotte announced on January 21 that New Hampshire would also go out of compliance with the minimum size increases⁷.

The unraveling of Addendum XXVII is a prime example of history repeating itself. Back in the 1980’s, there was a federal fishery management plan for lobster overseen by the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries. The federal plan adopted four 1/32” gauge increases scheduled over a five-year period. In the middle year, 1990, when no gauge increases were scheduled, industry groups (led by Maine industry) were successful in having each state legislature in the region block additional minimum size increases through state legislation. In response, NOAA Fisheries and the New England Fishery Management Council recognized lobster management was predominately a state issue and turned over management authority to the ASMFC⁸. The minimum gauge for LCMA1 has remained at 3 1/4” since.

February 2024 Lobster Board Meeting and Addendum XXXII

Soon after Keliher’s announcement, the Board recognized the challenge it faced as the largest lobster producing state in the country was intent on going out-of-compliance with the FMP. Accordingly, at its February 2025 meeting, the Board voted to initiate draft Addendum XXXII to “repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII.” Subsequently, the ASMFC held a virtual public hearing on the addendum on April 10, 2025 and the Board is expected to vote on the addendum at the upcoming May 5 Board meeting.

⁶ See DMF’s December 19, 2024 [advisory](#).

⁷ Note that Maine and New Hampshire’s rule-making processes were at different stages when these determinations were made. Maine was in its public hearing process and could simply not move forward final rules. Whereas New Hampshire had already codified rules and would have to initiate a process to amend and rescind them.

⁸ Note that NOAA Fisheries does implement federal regulations for lobster management (often on a delayed schedule). This is done to support the ASMFC’s interstate fishery management plan and not on their own volition through the Council process under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. NOAA Fisheries is also a voting member of the ASMFC’s Lobster Board.

During the February Board meeting, I expressed my strong disappointment about what transpired—the industry’s undermining of most of the conservation benefits developed through a multi-year management plan process at the 11th hour and the chilling effect this would likely have on the ASMFC process. I was especially frustrated because the states of Maine and New Hampshire—whose ASMFC delegations voted for these measures numerous times over the past two years—were the principal parties to this unravelling. While this sentiment was broadly shared among my colleagues at the Board, the draft addendum was supported if only to avoid a non-compliance scenario. For this reason, I fully anticipate the Board will also approve Addendum XXXII in May.

However, the Board also found it necessary and compelling to address the frustrations of its members. Accordingly, a second motion was also approved at the February 2025 meeting. This motion was for the ASMFC leadership to write a strongly worded letter to the states of Maine and New Hampshire, expressing disappointment in the outcome and the harm done to the ASMFC process, and putting those states and their industries on notice that the next round of conservation proposals must emanate from them. I moved this motion forward because, in my view, Maine and New Hampshire “broke it, so they own it”. I very much look forward to hearing from my counterparts on how to proceed, particularly following the release of the 2025 stock assessment later this year.

As a state director and long-time fishery manager, I fully understand the challenges associated with managing by consensus. I also recognize these challenges are particularly acute in Maine where there are four very active fishing associations representing lobster fishing interests and state law carves up the coast into seven zones, each with its own Zone Council that provides management advice to Maine DMR. However, given the size of Maine’s fishery and its obvious influence on region-wide lobster management initiatives, it is critical and sensible for Maine regulators and industry members to develop mutually acceptable conservation proposals before they are pursued at an interstate level. I believe a lesson was learned in Massachusetts (and New Hampshire) that Maine should provide leadership in lobster management and develop management options that the ASMFC can promulgate without being undermined by Maine interests.

Addendum XXXII and the OCCLCMA

While the focus of this memorandum so far has been primarily on the fallout from Maine’s decision to pursue non-compliance, there are also challenges regarding the state-only OCCLCMA fishery that warrant further discussion.

The OCCLMCA is a unique lobster fishery. Permit holders fish on the GOM/GBK stock like neighboring LCMA 1 and LCMA 3. However, unlike LCMA 1, which is principally a recruitment fishery, the size frequency of its lobster catch in the OCCLCMA is large and remarkably similar to LCMA3. This is due to the fact that the area is a migratory corridor for sexually mature lobsters moving seasonally between inshore and offshore grounds, as demonstrated by lobster tagging studies.

It is also a very small fishery in terms of the total number of traps fished and total number of active participants. There are only 67 OCCLCMA lobster trap fishers permitted. Of these, 40 do

not have a federal permit and are “state-only”. These participants fish the narrow three-mile band of waters around the eastern shore of the Cape primarily out of Provincetown Harbor and Nauset Inlet. The remaining 27 permit holders have a federal permit and can fish out into the federal zone and are primarily homeported out of the various harbors around Chatham and Harwich.

Beginning around 2000 with Addendum III, lobster management in the OCCLMCA began diverge from management in LCMA 1. This included going from a 3 ¼” to 3 ⅜” minimum gauge size (consistent with LCMA 3 at the time), very restrictive limited entry and individual (permit-specific) trap allocations based on historical performance, a 10% trap tax when allocations and permits are transferred⁹, and a two-month wintertime trap closure¹⁰.

Additionally, unlike LCMA 1, OCCLCMA fishers are also not required to v-notch all egg-bearing female, nor are the OCCLCMA permit holder subject to LCMA 1’s very restrictive v-notch standard of any v-shaped notch (commonly referred to as “zero-tolerance”).

In the past 25 years, ASMFC and NOAA Fisheries have pursued some additional changes to lobster management across the various LCMAs. While much of this effort has focused on the Southern New England stock (affecting LCMA 2 in Massachusetts), there have also been some changes affecting the offshore Gulf of Maine fishery. LCMA 3 permit holders have seen their trap allocations cut by about 25%, their minimum gauge size was increased from 3 ⅜ to 3 17/32, and a maximum gauge size of 6 ¾” and 1/8” v-notch standard were adopted. These last two biological measures (size limit and v-notch possession standard) were also applied by NOAA Fisheries in 2010 to the OCCLCMA federal permit holders. However, those federal rules were not extended to the state-only fishery, resulting in the disparate limits within this LCMA that Addendum XXVII sought to resolve through standardization. As a result, the state-only fishers are the only fishers along the US coast that do not have a maximum gauge size and this fishery also has the least restrictive v-notch standard among all commercial fishers.

These management differences have frequently put the state-only OCCLCMA fishery at odds with interests at the Board and their industry peers along the coast. This tension is particularly acute among the state-waters-only OCCLCMA fleet and LCMA 1 fishers, particularly in Maine. Many LCMA 1 fishers have embraced v-notching as the preeminent conservation strategy, and since the early 2000’s, have opted to mandate the v-notching of all egg-bearing lobsters and adopt the strictest v-notch possession standard (so-called “zero tolerance”). As such, they view the lax v-notching requirements in the state-only OCCLCMA fishery as undermining their conservation efforts (“they take the lobsters we v-notch”). These frustrations are also frequently aired while not fully recognizing the small scale of the OCCLCMA fishery and the strict effort controls it functions under. This dynamic was clearly at play at the recent virtual ASMFC public hearing on Addendum XXXII. In response, I intend to develop a brief report on the status and performance of the OCCLCMA fishery which I will share with the Board and the MFAC later this spring.

⁹ The 10% tax is no longer applied when a permit is transferred, only when trap allocation is transferred independent of a permit transfer.

¹⁰ This effort control closure has now been subsumed by the February 1 – May 15 Massachusetts Restricted Area trap gear closure to protect right whales which affects all of LCMA 1 in Massachusetts.

It is important to put this dynamic into context when dissecting the development of Addendum XXXII. This addendum was drafted to repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII. This means the other aspects of Addendum XXVII—v-notch standardization in OCCLCMA and trap tag issuance for LCMA 1 and 3—are maintained and to go into effect as scheduled. Accordingly, while the state-only OCCLCMA fishery will get a reprieve from the maximum gauge size, they will still be subject to the $\frac{1}{8}$ " v-notch standard beginning on July 1, 2025.

At the February 2025 Board meeting, the Massachusetts delegation made a motion to pursue an option in the draft addendum that would repeal all aspects of Addendum XXVII. Chairman Kane and Representative Armini both argued that excluding the repeal of the v-notch standardization rule inequitably targeted a small number of fishers while giving reprieve to the primary harvest area. This motion was notable because it failed to obtain a second, which in my view, speaks to the above stated tension regarding the v-notch rules for these fishers and the lack of support for maintaining this management approach coastwide. Because the motion did not receive a "second", the management option was not included in the draft addendum. Accordingly, the repeal of the v-notch standardization requirement cannot be included in the final addendum, which was requested by certain state-only OCCLCMA lobster fishers and their representatives at the ASMFC public hearing. Repealing the v-notch standardization rule would require the initiation of an additional addendum.

Throughout both the development of Addendum XXVII and XXXII, representatives from the state-only OCCLCMA fishery (including the Outer Cape Cod Lobstermen's Association), have raised objections to both the conservation and standardization measures proposed for the OCCLCMA. The argument is generally that: (1) they are a small fishery and their impact on the overall stock is negligible; (2) their conservation contributions, particularly their effort control plan, is strict and should be honored given a previous agreement between the Outer Cape Lobstermen's Association, the ASMFC, and DMF; and (3) the economic impact of v-notch standardization (and maximum gauge size standardization) is significant. To this last point, some fishers have argued that the economic impact of v-notch standardization could exceed reach 25% loss in catch. Curiously, we have not heard much comment from the federal permit holders in the OCCLCMA who have been subject to the $\frac{1}{8}$ " v-notch standard and $6\frac{3}{4}$ " maximum gauge size since 2010.

I do not intend to editorialize much on the arguments made by the state-only interests, as the Outer Cape Cod Lobstermen's Association and their attorney have made it known that they are considering pursuing legal action against DMF and the ASMFC over Addendum XXXII. However, I will reiterate several things that I have previously stated in public forums.

I understand the frustrations expressed by the state-waters only OCCLCMA fleet regarding Addendum XXXII and recognize that they operate at a fraction of the scale of the other LCMA that fish on the GOM/GBK stock. However, the purpose of the v-notch rule is standardization within the LCMA, and the v-notch standardization measure (as well as the maximum gauge size measure for which they will get reprieved) were scheduled to go into effect for 2025 irrespective of the trigger-index-based conservation measures. As justified in the Statement of the Problem in Addendum XXVII, "increasing consistency across management areas may help to address some

assessment and enforcement challenges, as well as concerns regarding the shipment and sale of lobsters across state lines.” I support the logic set forth in this justification and have long been concerned that disparate rules within the LCMA challenge the enforcement of conservation standards in the federal OCCLCMA fishery, across Massachusetts and elsewhere. For this reason, I have favored the v-notch and gauge size standardization pursued by Addendum XXVII, as I believe it reasonably balances enforcement and compliance issues against the unique nature of the OCCLCMA fishery. This position is also informed by the fact that I think the economic impacts expressed by the state-only OCCLMCA fishery are significantly exaggerated for effect. DMF has sampled this fishery (both state-only and federal permit holders) since 1981, and sampling intensity has been ramped up over the past decade. The data we have collected demonstrate that only 2.2% of the catch by weight includes lobsters that would be otherwise legal (e.g., not egg-bearing) but have a v-notch between the $\frac{1}{4}$ ” and the $\frac{1}{8}$ ” standard. This is an order of magnitude lower than estimates provided by industry.

Final Thoughts

I have stated previously that I intend to honor the ASMFC process and ensure Massachusetts fishers are not subject to stricter standards than fishers who fish the same LCMA but under rules enacted by another jurisdiction. I am resolute in the maintenance of this position, and this is evidenced by my intention to pursue emergency action to immediately implement Addendum XXXII. Given my respect for the ASMFC process, I also have no intention to pursue non-compliance (like Maine and New Hampshire threatened) so the state-waters-only OCCLCMA fishers can maintain a $\frac{1}{4}$ ” v-notch standard.

Table 1. Commercial Gauge Size and Escape Vent Rules to Be Rescinded by Addendum XXXII by LCMA

Implementation	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCCLCMA
July 1, 2025	<p>Minimum gauge size increase from 3 1/4" to 3 5/16"</p> <p>Maintains existing 3 1/4" minimum gauge size.</p>	Maintains existing 6 3/4" maximum gauge size.	<p>Establish 6 3/4" standard maximum gauge size for OCCLCMA.</p> <p>Maintains existing 6 3/4" maximum gauge size for OCCLCMA federal permit holders and no maximum gauge size for state-only OCCLCMA.</p>
July 1, 2027	<p>Minimum gauge size increase from 3 5/16" to 3 3/8"</p>	N/A	N/A
2028	<p>Trap escape vent size increase to 2" by 5 3/4" rectangular to 2 5/8" diameter.</p> <p>Maintains escape vent size of 1 15/16" by 5 3/4" rectangular or 2 7/16" diameter</p>	N/A	N/A
2029	N/A	<p>Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".</p> <p>Maintains existing 6 3/4" maximum gauge size.</p>	<p>Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".</p>

Table 2. Implementation Schedule for Commercial Fishing Gauge Size, Escape Vent, and V-Notch Rules Adopted in Addendum XXVII by LCMA

Implementation	LCMA 1	LCMA 3	OCCLCMA
July 1, 2025 (Regardless of trigger index)	Limit trap tag issuance to trap allocation with no extra trap tags awarded.	Limit trap tag issuance to trap allocation with no extra trap tags awarded.	Establish 6 3/4" maximum carapace size for state waters OCCLCMA. V-notch standard changes from 1/4" sharp v-notch without setal hairs to 1/8" v-notch with or without setal hairs for state waters OCCLCMA
July 1, 2025 (Year 1 following 35% decline in trigger index)	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 1/4" to 3 5/16"	N/A	N/A
July 1, 2026 (Year 2 following 35% decline in trigger index)	N/A	N/A	N/A
July 1, 2027 (Year 3 following 35% decline in trigger index)	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 5/16" to 3 3/8"	N/A	N/A
July 1, 2028 (Year 4 following 35% decline in trigger index)	Trap escape vent size change from 1 15/16" by 5 3/4" rectangular or 2 7/16" diameter to 2" by 5 3/4" rectangular to 2 5/8" diameter.	N/A	N/A
July 1, 2029 (Year 5 following 35% decline in trigger index)	N/A	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".

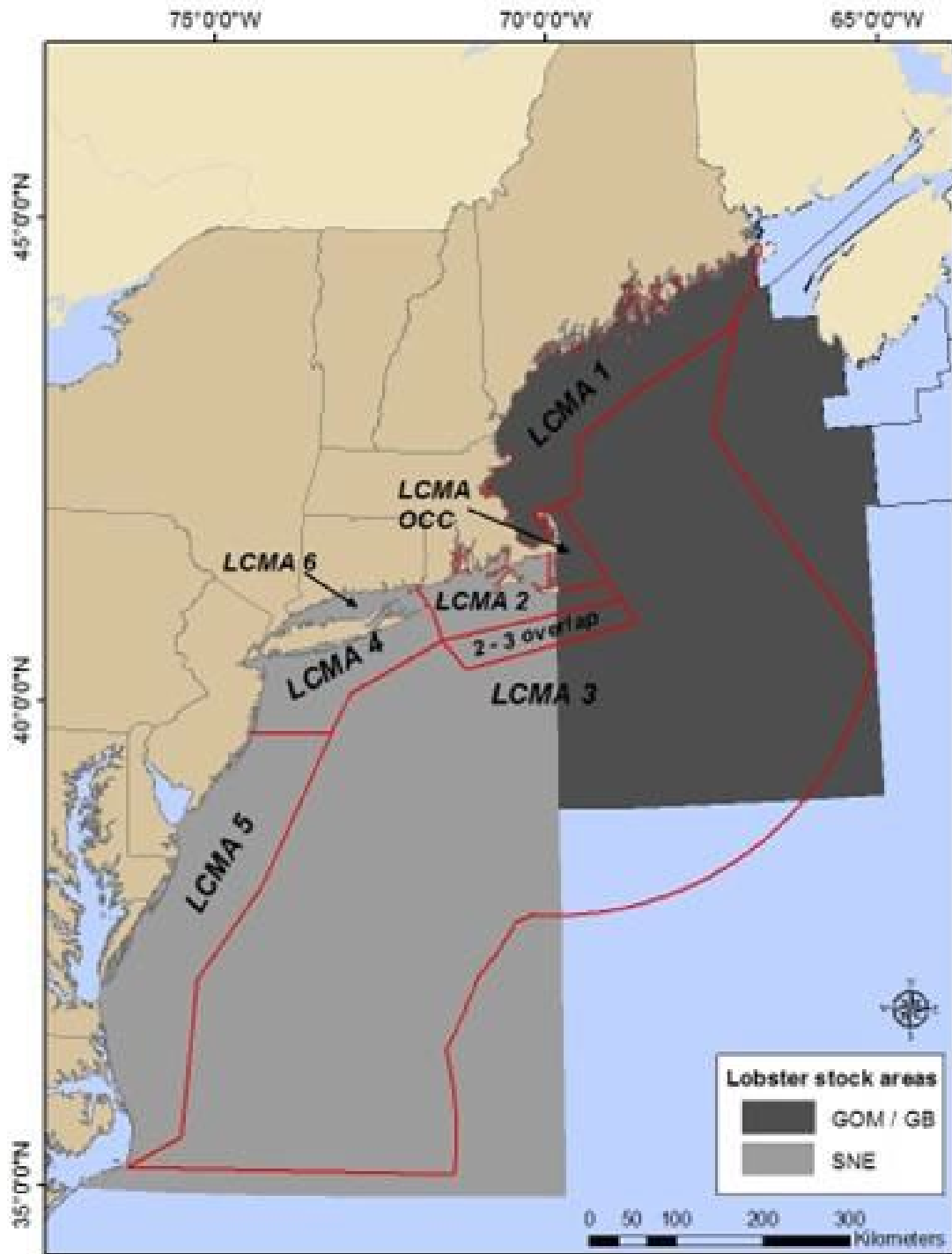
Table 3. Implementation Schedule for Recreational Fishing Rules by Management Area to Complement Addendum XXVII

Implementation	Gulf of Maine Management Area	Outer Cape Management Area
May 15, 2025	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 1/4" to 3 5/16"	Establish 6 3/4" maximum carapace size*
May 15, 2027	Minimum carapace size increase from 3 5/16" to 3 1/4"	N/A
May 1, 2028	Trap escape vent size change from 1 15/16" by 5 3/4" rectangular or 2 7/16" diameter to 2" by 5 3/4" rectangular to 2 5/8" diameter.	N/A
May 1, 2029	N/A	Maximum carapace size decrease from 6 3/4" to 6 1/2".
* Recreational v-notch rule is standardized across state at 1/8" indentation with or without setal hairs.		

Table 4. Anticipated 2025 Gauge Size, Escape Vent, and V-Notch Rules for Recreational Lobster Fishery by Management Area

Management Area	Minimum Gauge	Maximum Gauge	Escape Vent	V-Notch Standard
Gulf of Maine	3 1/4"	5"	A rectangular vent measuring at least 1 15/16" by 5 3/4" or two circular escape vents that measure at least 2 7/16" diameter.	1/8" indentation with or without setal hairs.
Outer Cape Cod	3 3/8"	N/A	A rectangular vent measuring at least 2" by 5 3/4" or two circular escape vents that measure at least 2 5/8" diameter.	1/8" indentation with or without setal hairs.
Southern New England	3 3/8"	5 1/4"	A rectangular vent measuring at least 2" by 5 3/4" or two circular escape vents that measure at least 2 5/8" diameter.	1/8" indentation with or without setal hairs.

Figure 1. Map of Lobster Management Areas Overlayed on Lobster Stock Areas





The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lt. Governor


REBECCA L. TEPPER
Secretary

THOMAS K. O'SHEA
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

FROM: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

DATE: April 18, 2025

SUBJECT: **Decision on Commercial Striped Bass Management Proposal**

Final Decision

This winter, DMF took to public hearing a proposal to adopt a slot limit and prohibit gaffing in the commercial striped bass fishery.¹ It is my recommendation that DMF not proceed with rule-making on this proposal at this time for the reasons described herein. Instead, I intend to continue the discussion of these, and additional possible commercial fishery amendments, with a to-be-named striped bass industry advisory panel and the MFAC Striped Bass Focus Group.

Public Hearing Proposal

DMF's interest in considering a commercial slot limit was based on concern about the future of the striped bass stock given the consecutive years of below average recruitment in the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, and Hudson River that are expected to cause declining biomass in the future. Because the scientific literature suggests beneficial effects of larger female striped bass on fecundity and recruitment success, I felt it justifiable to reconsider our management approach that results in the Massachusetts commercial striped bass fishery harvesting more large fish than any other jurisdiction.

The specifics of the proposal included retaining the current minimum size of 35" and adopting a maximum size (e.g., in the 43-45" range), as well as consideration of reducing the minimum size (e.g., to as low as 32" and potentially with a smaller maximum size) if there were concerns about discards or other factors to incorporate (e.g., market preference). Additionally, I sought feedback on fully prohibiting the use of gaffs in the commercial fishery with the adoption of a slot limit (currently only undersized fish may not be gaffed), similar to how gaffing became unlawful in the recreational fishery when a maximum size was adopted.

As expected, these proposals generated significant public interest and comment during the February 14–March 16, 2025 public comment period, including two hearings on March 10 (Gloucester) and March 11 (Bourne). More of the written comment favored the adoption of a slot

¹ This proposal was presented to the MFAC in January 2025. Refer to page 23 of the [meeting materials](#).

limit and gaffing prohibition, and most of that support came from recreational fishery participants. The comments we received at the in-person public hearings were primarily from commercial permit holders, and they opposed a maximum size, any change in the minimum size, and a ban on gaffing.

Comment in support of the commercial slot limit was based on the conservation benefits, while the opposition centered around several main themes: increased releases and differential discard mortality of larger fish; reduced ex-vessel value, both on a per trip and annual basis (from landing smaller fish and the associated quota reduction); and the lack of an interstate mandate for these actions. Reducing the minimum size raised additional concerns about the pace of quota consumption and putting more pressure on the 2015 year-class but was also seen as a way to reduce discards by some commenters. Prohibiting gaffing found some support as a means to reduce release mortality and enhance consistency across fisheries, but was strongly opposed by commercial anglers who said it would make them less efficient and less safe and asserted that they do not have a problem discerning keeper sized fish.

Decision Rationale

While there may be merit to the underlying conservation basis for the adoption of a commercial slot limit, I cannot proceed in making any recommendation to you at this time for a number of reasons.

First, the public was inadequately informed about the impact on the commercial quota. The magnitude of the quota reductions caused by adopting a slot limit to maintain conservation equivalency was provided as a range at the public hearings and the amounts presented also differed from my public hearing proposal memo given the timeline for the Technical Committee's review and data updates to the methodology. This turn of events, as well as the sheer number of minimum and maximum sizes included in the proposal, produced confusion and concern regarding the proposal's potential impact on the quota. Any future public hearing proposal that addresses commercial size limit changes will benefit from this year's hearings and the Technical Committee review and be narrower in scope and provide the needed clarity on the associated quota adjustment.

Second, the public comment highlighted several areas for further analysis or associated option development that cannot be completed in short order. There was stakeholder interest in DMF better documenting the conservation benefit of the proposal in terms of egg production and accounting for discards. Ideally, fecundity-at-size and discard mortality would be directly incorporated into the methodology for determining the conservationally equivalent quota adjustment, as was recognized by the ASMFC Technical Committee in reviewing our proposal. This warrants consideration before moving ahead, but if such improvements are deemed unrealistic (due to insufficient data for example), we may still be able to produce some estimate of the impact on egg production that accounts for releases. Contemporary data on commercial discard length frequency would benefit this work. We also have some pending analyses of data collected through DMF's striped bass citizen science project that are expected to isolate the effect of fish size on post-release mortality, which was of public interest. The interplay between the proposed size limits on discards, release mortality, and high-grading as raised in the public comment suggests these issues need to be discussed in greater detail with potential for some

additional management approaches. Some of these would benefit from additional analysis, such as the impact of angling gears and techniques that are still permitted in the commercial fishery (like snag and drop fishing with menhaden). All of these inquiries would help inform future management.

Third, the proposal ought to be considered in the context of possible interstate management changes in 2026 and the ongoing work of the MFAC's Striped Bass Focus Group. Since the development of the public hearing proposal, the commercial issues for consideration under ASMFC's Draft Addendum III to the interstate plan (expected to be voted on in October 2025) have expanded beyond a quota reduction (if warranted by updated stock projections) to include potential mandate of point-of-harvest commercial tagging programs. Currently the states have the option for either dealer-based or harvester-based commercial tagging programs, and Massachusetts is one of the few states with dealer-based tagging. States that have harvester-tagging rules have limited entry permitting, and in many cases, individual fishing quotas. Examples include Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. Because the Massachusetts management system features open access and three times more permits issued than active participants, the administrative burden would be substantial on DMF to issue and then recall unused tags at season's end. Such a requirement would fundamentally alter the Commonwealth's commercial striped bass fishery—as it would necessitate a significant reduction in the number of permits—and would trigger a more holistic review of our management approach. Even without an ASMFC mandate, the MFAC has previously expressed interest in evaluating such changes and its Striped Bass Focus Group is due to reconvene on the topic this year. Consequently, I also believe it is time to re-establish an industry advisory panel, such as DMF has brought together in past instances of considering large-scale management changes. I will keep the MFAC apprised as I undertake the next steps down this path.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

*May 6, 2025
1:15 – 5:15 p.m.*

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*M. Ware*) 1:15 p.m.
2. Board Consent 1:15 p.m.
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Proceedings from February 2025
3. Public Comment 1:20 p.m.
4. Update on 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*) **Action** 1:30 p.m.
 - Review and Consider Stock Assessment Terms of Reference
 - Review and Populate Stock Assessment Subcommittee Membership
5. Consider Approval of Draft Addendum III on Future Management Measures, Commercial Tagging, and Total Length Measurement for Public Comment (*E. Franke*) **Action** 2:05 p.m.
 - Technical Committee Report on Stock Projections (*K. Drew*)
 - Maryland Proposal for Recreational Season Baseline Option (*M. Luisi*)
6. Other Business/Adjourn 5:15 p.m.

The meeting will be held at The Westin Crystal City (1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; 703.486.1111) and via webinar; click [here](#) for details.

MEETING OVERVIEW

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

May 6, 2025

1:15 – 5:15 p.m.

Chair: Megan Ware (ME) Assumed Chairmanship: 1/24	Technical Committee Chair: Tyler Grabowski (PA)	Law Enforcement Committee Rep: Sgt. Jeff Mercer (RI)
Vice Chair: Chris Batsavage (NC)	Advisory Panel Chair: Vacant	Previous Board Meeting: February 4, 2025
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA, NC, NMFS, USFWS (16 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from February 2025

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting, public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time must sign-in at the beginning of the meeting. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Update on 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment (1:30-2:05 p.m.) Action

Background

- Work on the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment for Atlantic Striped Bass has begun and is scheduled to be presented to the Board in May or August 2027.
- The Technical Committee (TC) and met in March 2025 to develop draft terms of reference **(Briefing Materials)**.
- Board members submitted nominations for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment Subcommittee **(Briefing Materials)**.

Presentations

- Overview of draft terms of reference and stock assessment subcommittee nominations by K. Drew

Board actions for consideration at this meeting

- Approve stock assessment Terms of Reference
- Approve Stock Assessment Subcommittee Membership

5. Draft Addendum III (2:05-5:15 p.m.)

Background

- The Board initiated an addendum in December 2024 to consider changing management measures in 2026 to support stock rebuilding.
- The Board provided guidance to the Plan Development Team (PDT) in February 2025 on the scope of options for recreational and commercial measures and added options to consider commercial tagging and a coastwide definition of measuring ‘total length’.
- The Board also agreed to consider in May 2025 whether to include an option allowing Maryland to change its baseline recreational season (**Supplemental Materials**).
- The TC met in March 2025 to discuss projections and associated reductions for 2026, to address recreational measures analysis methods, and to review Maryland’s recreational season baseline methods (**Briefing Materials**).
- The Board requested projection sensitivity runs extending the projections beyond 2029 and using a lower recruitment assumption (**Supplemental Materials**).
- The PDT requested input from the Striped Bass Advisory Panel on the total length issue and from the Law Enforcement Committee on all three addendum issues (**Briefing Materials**).
- The PDT developed the draft addendum for Board review and provided an accompanying memo with specific points for Board discussion (**Briefing Materials**).

Presentations

- TC Report on Stock Projections by K. Drew
- Overview of Draft Addendum III for public comment by E. Franke
- Maryland proposal for baseline recreational season option by M. Luisi

Board action for consideration at this meeting

- Approve Draft Addendum III for public comment

6. Other Business/Adjourn (5:15 p.m.)

DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Crystal City
Annapolis, Maryland
Hybrid Meeting

February 4, 2025

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Call to Order, Chair Megan Ware	1
Approval of Agenda.....	1
Approval of Proceedings	1
Public Comment.....	1
Review and Consider Stock Assessment Schedule.....	1
Review Timeline for 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Technical Committee Recommendation on Assessment Schedule.....	1
Consider Whether to Conduct 2026 Stock Assessment Update	2
Discuss Scope of Draft Addendum III for 2026 Measures.....	4
Review Timeline and Initial Scope	5
Provide Guidance to Plan Development Team	5
Review and Populate the Advisory Panel.....	39
Adjournment.....	40

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1)
2. **Approval of Proceedings from December 23, 2024** by consent (Page 1)
3. **Move to exclude recreational mode split options from Draft Addendum III** (Page 12). Motion by Nichola Meserve; second by Chris Batsavage. Motion fails (Page 13).
4. **Move to not include options for an ocean recreational size limit under 28” in Draft Addendum III** (Page 16). Motion by Joe Cimino; second by Nichola Meserve. Motion passes (Page 17).
5. **Main Motion**
Move to include the concepts of Maryland season closure baseline adjustment approach in Draft Addendum III (Page 33). Motion by Mike Luisi; second by John Clark. Motion postponed.

Motion to Postpone
Move to postpone the motion until the Spring Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Meeting (Page 31). Motion by Adam Nowalsky; second by Eric Reid (Page 34). Motion passes (Page 32).
6. **Motion to include possession limit options in Draft Addendum III** (Page 34). Motion by Adam Nowalsky; second by Emerson Hasbrouck (Page 36). Motion fails for lack of majority (Page 35).
7. **Motion to include possession limit options for for-hire mode split in Draft Addendum III** (Page 35). Motion by Adam Nowalsky; second by Eric Reid (Page 38). Motion fails for lack of majority (Page 36).
8. **Move to ask the Plan Development Team to investigate reallocation of the commercial quota among the 6 states that currently harvest striped bass from the coastal stock. There would be no increase from the total 2024 quota of those 6 states combined** (Page 37). Motion by John Clark, second Eric Reid. Motion fails (Page 39).
9. **Motion to approve Peter Fallon of Maine to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel** (Page 39). Motion by Alison Hepler; second by Eric Reid. Motion passes with unanimous consent (Page 39).
10. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 40).

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for P. Keliher (AA)	Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Joe Cimino, NY (AA)
Rep. Allison Hepler, ME (LA)	Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)
Cheri Patterson, NH (AA)	Adam Nowalsky, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Raymond Kane, MA (GA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Rep. Jennifer Armini, MA (LA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Russel Dize, MD (GA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Pat Geer, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Matt Gates, CT, proxy for J. Davis (AA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Daniel Ryan, DC, proxy for R. Cloyd
Craig Miner, CT proxy for Rep. Gresko, CT (LA)	Lowell Whitney, US FWS
Marty Gary, NY (AA)	Max Appelman, NMFS

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Tyler Grabowski, Technical Committee Chair	Sgt. Jeff Mercer, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.
Mike Celestino, Stk. Assmnt. Subcommittee Chair	

Staff

Bob Beal	Tina Berger	Emilie Franke
Toni Kerns	Madeline Musante	Katie Drew

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, February 4, 2025, and was called to order at 2:45 p.m. by Chair Megan Ware.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MEGAN WARE: It's 2:45, so we're going to call to order the Striped Bass Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR WARE: We'll start with Approval of the Agenda. Are there any additions or modifications to today's agenda? Seeing none; the agenda is approved by consent. Next is approval of proceedings from our December, 2024 meeting.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR WARE: Are there any edits to the proceedings from December, 2024? Seeing none; the proceedings are approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR WARE: Next is public comment, so we're looking for comments on items that are not on the agenda. I'll look for a show of hands either in the room or on the webinar, and we'll go from there. I am not seeing any hands on the webinar or in the room. Giving folks one more opportunity.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER STOCK ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

CHAIR WARE: Okay, we will move on to Item Number 4, which is Review and Consider the Stock Assessment Schedule. Today we're going to review the timeline for our 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment and the Technical Committee

recommendations on the assessment schedule. I will pass it over to Katie Drew.

DR. KATIE DREW: I know it feels like we just finished the 2024 assessments, but it is in fact time to start thinking about the 2027 Benchmark Assessment timeline. Part of the reason we're maybe going a little faster than usual is striped bass is on the NRCC schedule to be reviewed through a spring 2027 research track process, which means it will get reviewed in mid-March 2027. In the past we've been on the fall schedule, so October or November-ish.

This means we do need to be done about six months sooner than we have been for previous benchmarks, so we are starting now, essentially. This timeline will allow us to include the recalibrated MRIP data, because that is scheduled to be released in April of 2026, but that does mean that we will only have data through 2025. We will not have time to get 2026 data into the assessment for this review.

REVIEW TIMELINE FOR 2027 BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ON ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

DR. DREW: Here is kind of a maybe too detailed assessment timeline. The point I just wanted to highlight here is that a couple of the next steps will be approving the TORs in the Stock Assessment Subcommittee, and we already have put out the call for the 2024 data as a TC. We'll also be doing, because this is a benchmark, a full press release to allow other sources of data, new sources of data to be brought to the table by people outside of the usual Technical Committee process, to be considered at a data workshop in July of this year. We will sort of be finishing up with an Assessment Workshop in August of 2026, in order to have the assessment sort of completed and reviewed at the Technical Committee level by January in 2027, so that that report can go to

the Panel in mid-February, and then to the Review Workshop in mid-March.

In theory, this means it could be presented to the Board at spring meeting in 2027. However, in the past, we sent both to get the final assessment and peer reports from the NRCC, and so this may end up getting pushed back until August if the materials are not available in time. But either way, we're talking about either May or August, so spring or summer of 2027, having the completed benchmark assessment.

In terms of immediate Board tasks that are coming up, we do need to nominate and approve the SAS, so a call for nominations with that go out via e-mail after this meeting, and the SAS will be approved by the Board at the spring meeting. Similarly, we need to approve the TORs.

The TC will meet and provide a set of draft TORs as part of the materials for the spring meeting. At which point the Board can have a chance to provide edits or ask questions or provide feedback, and approve the TORs during that spring meeting, which will be then sent to the NRCC for their consideration and approval as part of their process. But those are two of the immediate things that we're going to look at the Board for coming up.

We also, technically, on the assessment schedule have a little tentative assessment update scheduled for 2026, following the usual two-year cycle for striped bass. If you remember, we were supposed to have, after the most recent stock assessment, a benchmark stock assessment in 2019. We were supposed to do an update in '21, '23, '25 and then a benchmark in '27.

Because the 2021 assessment update would have had 2020 as the terminal year, the TC recommended and the Board agreed to push that back a year, so that we could have a non-COVID year as the terminal year, and avoid some of that uncertainty around the 2020 data.

But as a result, we sort of bumped up now into having an assessment technically scheduled for 2026, right in front of this benchmark assessment.

CONSIDER WHETHER TO CONDUCT 2026 STOCK ASSESSMENT UPDATE

DR. DREW: The TC is recommending that this update not be conducted, that we just skip this 2026 update, for a number of reasons. Mainly, the 2026 update would overlap, basically completely with the 2027 benchmark work and that to have the update completed by annual meeting, we would actually need to move up the deadline for our 2025 data, which would put additional pressure on the TC and the SAS with that release of the calibrated numbers, to basically put in a shorter turnaround time to incorporate this new time series into the assessment update.

It's not just a matter of adding a new year of data, we have to redo the whole time series to include those calibrated numbers, and then after all of this work, the 2027 benchmark would be available less than a year later with a potentially new model, potentially new reference point, et cetera. I think the TC questions whether the Board would actually use the information in the 2026 assessment in any way, knowing that a benchmark assessment will be available less than a year later. The TC and the SAS can provide the Board with data checking throughout the benchmark assessment process, so we can provide a summary of removals and the two indices in 2025 and 2026, and we can if the Board is interested provide updated projections with the current model and the uncalibrated data when the 2025 data are available is desired to help the Board sort of check in on progress.

But the TC feels very strongly that doing the 2026 assessment would just be an untenable workload, and the priority should be the

completion of the 2027 benchmark assessment. With that I am happy to take any questions.

CHAIR WARE: The Board action today is whether to make a recommendation on removing that 2026 stock assessment update. If we come to a consensus, I'm hoping we don't need a motion, but we'll get to that point after some questions. Are there any questions for Katie on her presentation? Mike Luisi.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: In reality we're talking about probably a six-month period of time between what would be the result of a 2026 assessment update that would be delivered, let's say in October at an annual meeting, and then the benchmark assessment, which would be the spring of the following year, which is only six months' time. I'm getting nods, so that helps me understand the timing.

DR. DREW: Yes, that's correct.

MR. LUISI: With that understanding I think I would be supportive of following the guidance of the Technical Committee at this point and just waiting until that benchmark. I think that is going to be our next bigger opportunity to have a comprehensive discussion about the state of this resource, and the status of the stock. I think by doing both, we're just going to compound the concerns and confusion, even by the public.

CHAIR WARE: Next I have Joe Cimino.

MR. JOE CIMINO: Not truly a question. I agree with Mike; I worry about the confusion. You know the whole intent of a benchmark is to perhaps bring something new forward. The question part of it would be, just to confirm, there is going to be a continuity run, and that as Mike pointed out, the timeline for that will happen within maybe six to eight months from what we would have seen as an update. But my concern would be the confusion here if the benchmark does pivot in any way, that the

information in that update that the Board got may not be as relevant.

CHAIR WARE: I'm not seeing any other questions. Is there anyone who is uncomfortable or disagrees with the TC recommendation not to conduct that 2026 stock assessment update? Nichola Meserve.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: Not opposition to that. I fully support the Technical Committee's recommendation. I did want to ask, I guess, about the prospect of an update immediately after the benchmark assessment. The benchmark is going to have data through 2025, and particularly if we were to change management measures in 2026, having an update sooner rather than later would be of interest, to make sure that we're not in a similar situation, the last assessment where we were making projections about how management measures have impacted our fishery performance.

DR. DREW: Yes, I think if the Board was interested in doing an assessment update in sort of, I guess, almost a federal model of, you have your research track and then you would base management on that immediate subsequent management track or update. I think that is something the Board could definitely consider.

In terms of timeline, I think we would be looking at presenting that update in November or at the annual meeting, instead of, would that be able to have the 2026 data versus say presenting it in, I mean we can present the benchmark when it is available, which would be May or August, but there is no way that we could do an update before November, to include 2026 data.

I think maybe if you get closer to that the Board can think about, do you want to respond based on the 2025 terminal year and some projections based on what we see happen in 2026. Do you want to wait and see, do a real quick update,

which is definitely additional work for the TC after they just went through a benchmark, or there are options for the Board to consider. But it would add additional time to get that 2026 data and add it to the assessment.

CHAIR WARE: Do you have a response, Nichola?

MS. MESERVE: Just to confirm. That is a discussion that we'll have a year or two from now as to when the next assessment would be.

DR. DREW: I mean if you guys have an opinion on that right now and are ready to make a decision you could definitely make that, but I think the schedule is definitely still open, in terms of like what happens after that benchmark. We don't really have anything set in stone at the moment.

MS. MESERVE: Okay, thank you.

DR. DREW: IN terms of when you would like what the drop-dead date would be, I think probably sometime next year would be the latest, just in terms of everybody's understanding, everybody's workload, and kind of what we would need to do coming out of that assessment. I think the focus is going to be 100 percent on the benchmark until we're done with it, but then like knowing for 2027, what do we need to be prepared to talk to you guys about?

Like do you want to see a lot of projections right away, do you want to wait for that update, you know that kind of stuff. Maybe sometime in mid to late 2026, you guys can talk about what you're feeling. I do feel a little bit like you guys are probably not going to want to make the decision until you see the answer, but maybe that is my own cynicism here. I think there is not a hard, necessarily, a hard deadline at this point, but late 2026.

CHAIR WARE: I think what I'm hearing is we can see how Addendum III progresses and help that

inform our decision, so that would be my recommendation. Is there anyone who is opposed to the TC recommendation to not do the 2026 stock assessment update? Seeing no hands, I'm going to take that as a consensus position from the Board to not do that 2026 assessment update. That recommendation will go to the Policy Board tomorrow. Thank you, Katie. We're now going to move on to starting to talk about Addendum III, which is for the 2026 measures.

Emilie is going to review our timeline for that Draft Addendum and highlight some questions for the Board today, and we're hoping to get some feedback for the Plan Development Team, so that we can come back to the May meeting with a fairly solid draft of that Addendum, and continue to get more feedback. I will pass it over to Emilie.

DISCUSS SCOPE OF DRAFT ADDENDUM III FOR 2026 MEASURES

MS. EMILIE FRANKE: I will jump right in here to talk about Draft Addendum III. I just want to first refresh everyone's memory of the motion that the Board approved a little less than two months ago. Move to initiate an Addendum to support striped bass rebuilding by 2029, in consideration of 2024 recreational and commercial mortality, while balancing socioeconomic impacts.

Options should include, if needed, a range of overall reductions, consideration of recreational versus commercial contributions to the reductions, recreational season and size changes, taking into account regional variability of availability and no harvest versus no targeting closures. Final action should be taken by the annual 2025 meeting, in order to be in place for the 2026 fisheries.

REVIEW TIMELINE AND INITIAL SCOPE

MS. FRANKE: First, I just want to talk about the timeline piece. The motion specified taking final action by the annual meeting, and the Board discussed sort of two potential timelines. The fastest potential timeline would actually be completing the Addendum by August, so in that scenario we're here today in February, where the Board will be providing guidance to the PDT.

PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM

MS. FRANKE: Then the PDT can come back to the Board at the spring meeting in May with a Draft Addendum. If the Board approves the Draft Addendum for public comment at that May meeting, we would have public hearings on the public comment in May and June, and then it would come back to the Board in August to select final measures and approve the Addendum.

Alternatively, for taking final action in October, that would provide some more time if the Board had additional guidance or modifications they wanted to see for the Draft Addendum through this process. You know we would start the same way. The PDT would start work after today, come back in the spring with a draft document.

In May, if the Board decides that they would like to see the document modified, the PDT could go back, make the modifications over the summer, and then come back to the Board again in August, with the updated Draft Addendum. The Board could then approve it for public comment in August. You would have public hearings and a comment period in August and September, and then the Board would take action in October.

Those are the two potential timelines here. Then to address the motion, in terms of what the motion specified for the Draft Addendum.

Based on that motion, the PDT has been assembled, and the PDT will look at potential reductions for 2026 based on TC projections that will incorporate preliminary 2024 data. That data from MRIP should be available mid to later this month. The Technical Committee will meet sometime in March to discuss those projections. The projections will continue to use target 50 percent probability of rebuilding, unless the Board indicated otherwise today. Then of course, also according to the motion, the PDT will consider different options for how the sectors would contribute to that reduction.

For any reduction, for any reduction on the commercial side, the PDT would consider commercial quota reductions. For any reductions on the recreational side, the PDT would consider size limit changes and/or season closures, as specified in the motion, both no harvest and no targeting closures.

But today we are requesting some additional guidance from the Board to further narrow the scope of these potential options. I think there was a lot of discussion at the last meeting about, you know the TC report from December had a lot of different options, particularly for seasonal closures. This is a new management tool for the Board, so there is a lot of things to think about with regard to seasonal closures especially, but also for size limits and a couple of other things.

We're hoping today to get some guidance to help the PDT really focus on what the Board wants to see in this Addendum. The first question, these questions were all laid out in a memo to the Board that was in Main Materials, so I'm just going to go over the questions. First is on recreational mode splits.

This topic has come up at the Board in recent management actions, so it would be helpful to know up front if the PDT should be considering mode splits for recreational options, so that we know what we should be looking at. The next set of questions is on recreational size limits.

The first is the Board looking for slot limits or minimum size limits or both.

For any size limit, how small or how large would the Board want to go? For example, is a 2-inch slot feasible? How low do you want to go for the ocean? How large would you want to go for the ocean, that sort of thing. For the ocean size limits as well, is the Board still interested in a small fish analysis or looking at fish under 28 inches for the ocean?

Then also, is the Board's intent here to protect the remaining strong year classes by having size limit options that avoid them? A couple things to think about here in terms of size limits. Then we have several questions on seasonal closures. The first topic, this came up also a lot at the December Board meeting as equity.

What type of equity is the Board looking for in seasonal closures? The TC report in December presented options with equity, in terms of how long each region would close. It sounded like there was some discussion about looking at equity from the perspective of each region having the same percent reduction overall with the closure, even for different lengths, as long as they both have the same estimated percent reduction.

Any guidance folks have on what form of equity you are looking for, in terms of seasonal closures, would be really helpful. There are a couple questions about regions. For ocean seasonal closures the first question is, is the Board still interested in any sort of coastwide closures? There was a lot of discussion in December about the regional closures, so we're wondering if we should just take coastwide closures off the table, and only have regional options, or if the Board was still looking to see a coastwide closure option. Then for the ocean, are there specific regional breakdowns the Board would like to see? The PDT can start with the regional breakdown that the Board discussed in December, and that was Maine through Rhode Island and then Connecticut through North Carolina.

If there are others the Board would specifically like to see, that would be helpful to hear as well. Then there was a question, how small should the regions be? There was some discussion, I think some public comments about perhaps having a single state be its own region. If the Board had any guidance on that, that would also be helpful.

Then the final few questions for seasonal closures are about timing. First, should the PDT consider the options that split a closure reduction between two waves? Instead of closing, for example, for four weeks consecutively to meet a reduction, should we have, you know close two weeks at the beginning of the season, close two weeks at the end of the season, so should we have options like that, that split the closure?

Then also, in terms of the timing. The TC Report presented options that prioritized closures that would be the shortest possible closure to achieve a reduction. Obviously, those closures would take place when the most removals are occurring, so when the fishery is most active. There was some discussion about potential impacts of course of closures, so if there are other timing considerations, you know if the PDT should not only be looking at the shortest possible closures, they should be thinking about other things. That would be helpful to know as well.

Then finally, the last question is, is there anything else that you would like to see in the Addendum. Again, as much guidance as we can get today is helpful. As I mentioned, you know there are a lot of options in the TC Report. I think it would be really helpful for the Board and the PDT if you had any guidance on where to focus this Addendum today. That would be really helpful. That's it, happy to take any questions, and then we can move into discussion.

CHAIR WARE: Great, thanks, Emilie. I'm going to propose we structure the conversation as;

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board.

The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

we'll start with any clarifying questions on the presentation. Then I think the best way to approach this is going topic by topic. I'm hoping to avoid motions if we can, although if there is strong opposition from a Board member to an idea, we will move to a motion in that situation.

I do think there is a potential here that we will get a lot of different ideas, so at some point we may need to start prioritizing that. But we will let you know when we need to start doing that. We'll start with any clarifying questions for Emilie. David Borden.

MR. DAVID V. BORDEN: I'm just curious about the socioeconomic impacts. What process and what data are we going to use to do that? That is one question.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, I'll respond to that question first. I have met with the SES members, the reps for striped bass, and in the last few management documents for striped bass, Addendum II and Amendment 7, there was some socioeconomic content, and that was a summary of some past studies that have been done for striped bass. Several years ago, there was, I think a stated preference survey to understand angler preferences for striped bass, so there is some older work for a subset of states, and the management documents typically summarize the sort of major findings from that work. But there is no coastwide dataset to enumerate or quantify the socioeconomic impacts of different management options. You know we will continue to provide that summary of past economic studies that have been done for striped bass, but we're not going to be able to quantify for this option, this has a greater impact in this option.

We have discussed potentially putting together the available MRIP data, so for example directed trips in trying to provide as much information to the Board as we can about what data are available, about directed trips by region by Wave, so the Board can understand

how the fishery is occurring, to sort of potentially consider those impacts of different closures. But at that point it will be mostly a summary of past economic studies and the available MRIP data.

MR. BORDEN: Thanks, Emilie, and then the other question is on the timeline. We're basically talking about a timeline that would result in October implementation. I guess my question is, and I'll direct this to mid-states primarily. Does that timeline accommodate changes in the commercial fisheries? I think it does, but how late can we go? Let's say we get to October, there is a little bit more work that has to be done. How late can we go and still affect the commercial fishery in the mid, is my question.

CHAIR WARE: I'll turn to any of the Mid-Atlantic states or states with commercial fisheries, if they would like to respond to that. Mike Luisi, thank you.

MR. LUISI: Thank you, Madam Chair, I was waiting for somebody else's hand. We talked about this a number of times before. I think October is really the time where a final decision will need to be made. If we wait until November, and try to have a special meeting, that could be doable, but it would be more challenging. Anything in December is a no-go, as far as affecting the upcoming commercial season, which for Maryland starts on January 1st.

Hopefully, we had this discussion in December. Hopefully we're on a path that will have final action either in August or October of this year. If we hold to that timeline, Maryland will have no problem in incorporating any changes to the commercial fishery for the upcoming season, which would be 2026.

CHAIR WARE: I did just confirm the annual meeting this year is the week of October 27th, in case that date is important to folks. Any

other questions before we get into discussion?
Yes, John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thanks, Emilie, I was just curious. I thought it might have come up at the last meeting, but the states that have these like kind of specific fisheries like Delaware summer slot. Would those still be intact with what we had considered, or is that kind of not part of the motion?

MS. FRANKE: It wasn't part of the Board's motion for this Addendum, but the other motion that the PDT was considering for 2025 stated that the Delaware Summer Slot Fishery, the Pennsylvania Spring Fishery and the Hudson River Fishery would have to come up with measures to meet whatever the reduction is. I think a logical starting point for the PDT would be to include similar language for 2026.

CHAIR WARE: Last check of clarifying questions. Okay, not seeing any other hands, we will get into discussion, and we'll go topic by topic here. I think staff has some slides to help guide us through this, again looking for answers to these questions, and if folks are strongly opposed to a suggestion that is made, at that point we'll move to a motion. We're starting with projections. Bill Hyatt, do you have a suggestion on projections?

MR. WILLIAM HYATT: Well, I do have what I think is a relatively easy suggestion or recommendation that doesn't fall within the question list. Is this a good time to bring it up quickly?

CHAIR WARE: Sure.

MR. HYATT: This is a follow up to some of the discussion that took place at the last meeting. At the last meeting you'll recall that we were presented with four spawning stock projections. All four of them converged at the target and all four of them ended at 2029. There were a number of us that asked questions of what things would look like projected out beyond

2029, for the obvious reason that that was influential to our thinking on this issue.

This is just a simple request, and that is that we rerun these striped bass spawning stock biomass projections out to at least 2035, and would request that again, there be four projections done. One of them with low recruitment, mean recruitment equivalent to the last six years, where we've seen extremely low recruitment.

Another scenario where mean recruitment is averaged over the 12-year timeframe, and then each of those with low fishing mortality and moderate fishing mortality applied. Then the hope is and the belief is that this will give those of us around the table and the public with sort of a more realistic understanding of what we're up against here. It is my understanding that this can be relatively easily done.

DR. DREW: That is definitely easily done, I think. You know I would just caution the Board to make sure that we're not overwhelming the document with too much information, but if these scenarios are agreeable to the Board, we can definitely provide you those as part of that. If there going to use kind of changes or modifications or concerns that the Board level was providing that information, you know we can have that discussion. From a technical standpoint it is definitely doable that we can provide that for the PDT to incorporate into the document.

MS. FRANKE: Just for recruitment you mentioned a recent sort of super low recruitment that we've been seeing, and then I think you said average of 12-year recruitment. But I was wondering if you were maybe thinking about the low recruitment assumption we used for the assessment, which is basically 2008 forward, or if you had a specific timing you were thinking of.

MR. HYATT: Most important from my way of thinking is that one of the projections had to be

built off of what we're seeing over the last six years. As far as the other, you know I picked 12 years as an average, just to bring that up a bit, but if there is a better number, we would certainly want that to be used.

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Bill, and just one other follow-up. For these additional projections, are you thinking these would be sensitivity runs and sort of the TC and PDT would have, I guess essentially, you know these could be four different projections with maybe four different potential reductions for 2026.

Just thinking about sort of, are these just sensitivity runs to whatever the TC and PDT sort of identify as sort of the reduction scenario and these are sort of sensitivities around that, or are you looking for options for potentially a couple different reductions?

MR. HYATT: I believe the answer is, these are sensitivity runs. I was not looking for them to build in various management decisions into these.

CHAIR WARE: Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: I have a level of discomfort with that. We have any number of species. I'm thinking of cobia, where at some point the projections are just, I guess unhelpful. I appreciate Bill's concern, but the idea that we're giving someone a realistic picture ten years out, with all these assumptions that kind of de-evolve year after year. I'm just kind of concerned that the idea is we're helping the situation, when we might be not getting a more realistic picture.

CHAIR WARE: The question is, can you live with it come May, so if the answer to that question is no, I would recommend you make a motion.

MR. CIMINO: Katie, do you feel at this point you could give, or is that something that you feel you need to look into a little bit. Then my suggestion would be, can you please look into it

a little bit. If you feel you could give an answer now.

DR. DREW: I guess I would just say, for sure there are elements of this that we will not have a good handle on, mainly fishing mortality. We're struggling with what is going to happen next year or the year after that, let alone where are things going to be in ten years? But I will say for striped bass, they are a little more unique than some of our fish species, which is that they do take so long to mature.

Ten years out is basically when some of these really poor year classes will finally be in the SSB. Right now, our rebuilding deadline and our rebuilding trajectory is supported by the 2018 and the 2015-year classes, and the recent really 2020 forward low recruitment that we've seen, has not had a chance to percolate through to the SSB yet, because they are not mature yet.

Basically, that ten years out is this series of poor recruits finally maturing into the SSB, and what does that say about, you know what is the trajectory after we get to 2029, which I think is part of the concern here is that we are rebuilding on the basis of one very strong and one above average year class, and if we were so focused on 2029, what is going to happen after 2029 for this stock? What does it mean when we get to be rebuilt, is where I think some of this concern is coming from. I think I would agree that there is certainly uncertainty around that. But striped bass is a little unique in that there is a longer lag between the poor recruitment we see now, and kind of when that will get past the SSB down the road. I don't know if that helps or not, but that is sort of my perspective.

MR. CIMINO: Well, thank you, very much appreciate that. I won't oppose this, but I think each of us should use a level of caution as these are given to us.

CHAIR WARE: One more clarification for you.

DR. DREW: Just to say like, these projections, as you just discussed, will not affect, or like we did similar projections, similar sensitivity runs, and like your probability are the reductions that you need, et cetera. That was not strongly affected by that 2029 deadline. This is just going to be what is going out beyond it, so it should not affect the management options that we will be presenting or any of those analyses. It's more just about some context for what the potential projectory after the 2029 date is. Did that help or does not help?

CHAIR WARE: We are talking about projections, Board guidance and projections, any other Board guidance? Yes, Chris Batsavage.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Something for the Board to consider for projections is maybe including a 60 percent probability of rebuilding the stock, so looking at options for meeting that in the short term. Not replace the 50 percent, but see what it looks like at 60 percent.

MS. FRANKE: Just to clarify, are you looking for one set of options for a 50 percent probability reduction and then a second set of options for a 60 percent probability reduction?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes. I think to kind of account for, I think some inherent management uncertainty we'll be facing, depending on what other options we include in this Addendum. The 60 percent probability provides a little buffer of actually rebuilding the stock. At least the 50 percent, we aim for 60 and hope for at least 50.

CHAIR WARE: Any other Board guidance on projections? Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: Not projections, but to the point of these different ranges of options for the different scenarios and probabilities. The way that the TC structured the options in the potential Board action memo allowed for the Board, there was different percentages all throughout the reductions.

The Board could pull from some places to achieve various reductions. I was just going to make a suggestion that it be presented similarly to the prior analyses, so that the Board has that flexibility. If we make a determination on one projection or another, you know it provided a way for the Board to kind of pick and choose a little bit.

CHAIR WARE: We're going to move on to recreational mode splits, and I think the question here is, what is our guidance to the Plan Development Team on recreational mode splits in the development of management options? Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: My preference would be to exclude mode split options from Draft Addendum III. We recently considered them in Draft Addendum II and did not adopt them, they had limited public support at the time. There are many commenters who supported equal opportunities across the recreational mode, as well as equal participation in rebuilding the stock.

I don't think that now is the time for us to be considering carve outs during the rebuilding time period. The Law Enforcement Committee also spoke to how mode splits erode compliance and enforcement. There are a number of reasons that I think this is one area we could slim down the potential range of options, in hopes of getting to final action by August or October if necessary. Based on the discussion, I do want to make that in a motion, if necessary.

CHAIR WARE: I saw Mike Luisi, do you want to comment on that?

MR. LUISI: Unsurprisingly to many of you, I kind of think the opposite of what Nichola just presented. It was a year ago now when we convened here as a Board, and it was decided at that time that mode splits were not going to be something that would be allowed in the

recreational fishery. The state of Maryland did just that.

We moved around from mode splits and implemented a one-fish bag limit for all of our anglers. The consequences of that action have been dire. When I look at the motion that is before us today about the initiation of this Addendum. The Addendum was initiated in consideration of the 2024 recreational and commercial mortality, while balancing socioeconomic impacts.

Those socioeconomic impacts are absolutely real. One decision made a really big difference in my state. You'll hear numbers that will be presented as part of public comment, I'm sure, as this Addendum continues to develop. We're looking at 60, 70, 80 percent down on trips in the charterboat community in the state of Maryland, and it has been a really, really difficult thing to try to overcome.

While I realize we had this debate only a year ago, I think that I also came to the conclusion in my mind at the meeting last year that this conversation about mode splits goes another step beyond considering conservation. This is more of a philosophical type of discussion about equity and what is the right thing to do.

I feel like the public should have another opportunity through this Addendum, since it is being developed based on the challenges of 2024 and the socioeconomic impacts is one of the things that we're supposed to be focusing on. I don't know how we don't have that as a follow up discussion, based on the changes that occurred and the impacts that happened as a result of it. I feel like we should have this as part of the Addendum, and I would support mode splits being incorporated into this plan.

CHAIR WARE: Next I have Jay. I'm sensing we'll do a motion on this, but we'll offer some discussion to start. Go ahead, Jay.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: I also support keeping mode splits in there. I guess as I started thinking about it though, and kind of the continuum now of, now if we're doing 50 percent and 60 percent that is a quick doubling of the central options. We make these documents really difficult for the public really quickly, trying to make inflexibility. I think we're doing it for a good reason, but. I guess what I was wondering is, do we have to be for the modes, say we do a couple of mode split options.

Do we have to be explicit, like the options that show up in the Addendum. Is that what has to be done in the end, or is there flexibility with that? I guess what I'm getting at is, there may be a way to kind of shrink down a number of options by just offering some middling option, but then allowing during the public process, or when we come back to the Board, allowing that to move away from what was explicit in the Addendum. I guess I just have that question posed to you, but in the end, I would like to see the mode split stay in the document.

MS. FRANKE: In response to your question, I think maybe you're referring to if we included some sort of range of options the Board could go between, I guess in terms of seeing the math, the analysis for a particular option. The Draft Addendum would be, I think very explicit about, here's this option and this potential reduction. I mean there could be a range of options without that analysis, but in order to have that analysis attached to it with a potential reduction with this particular combination. I think it would have to be pretty explicit.

For example, the Board could say, you know we're only looking at mode splits for size limits, or only looking at mode splits for season closures. The Board could sort of say, for certain types of options we want a mode split. That could help narrow it, but I think if you want to see a percent reduction attached to an option, you have to be pretty explicit about what the option is.

CHAIR WARE: All right, so I've heard different opinions here. At this point I've heard support from two people for the mode splits. If that is not something you can live with or you strongly oppose, this would be your opportunity to make a motion. Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I would **move to exclude recreational mode split options from Draft Addendum III.**

CHAIR WARE: let's give staff a second to put that up, and then we'll look for a second. All right, so we have a motion to exclude recreational mode split options from Draft Addendum III. Is there a second to that motion? Chris Batsavage. Nichola, I know you provided some comments, any additional rationale?

MS. MESERVE: Not at this time, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Chris, as the seconder, do you have any rationale you would like to flag?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Nichola covered everything, thanks.

CHAIR WARE: Is there any other discussion on this motion? Eric Reid.

MR. ERIC REID: I'll be brief. I do agree with Mr. Luisi and Dr. McNamee. This is not only about saving striped bass, it's saving a longstanding tradition of the way of life, which is the for-hire sector, and it would be really unfortunate if that happened. The numbers that Mr. Luisi spoke about in decline; I think those are probably underestimated at some point, so I would oppose this motion for sure.

CHAIR WARE: Jeff Kaelin.

MR. JEFF KAE LIN: I'm going to oppose this also. I think we're working on considering mode splits in the recreational sector separation data collection amendment or addendum right now with fluke, scup and black sea bass here at the Commission, at the Council. I think that we

ought to leave this option in for this striped bass addendum. I'm opposed to the motion, personally.

CHAIR WARE: Any other discussion on the motion? Yes, Bill Hyatt.

MR. HYATT: I have a question. I know that a few years back, and I think we had a workgroup on mode splits. I am embarrassed to say that I cannot remember the outcome of that workgroup, what happened. I wasn't personally involved, but I would just be curious if somebody could refresh my memory.

CHAIR WARE: We're going to go to the Executive Director for that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Yes, thanks, Bill. You are right, it was a working group and at the same time we were working on de minimis and allocation. We had about, if only Spud was in here, he was Chair. We had like four different working groups going on at the same time, and the Policy Board prioritized the other work over mode splits, because the Mid-Atlantic Council was working through their process of recreational reform.

Our Board and the Mid-Atlantic Council were working together on it, and one of those provisions in the recreational reform work was mode splits. We stepped back from our working group and let the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Board and the Mid-Atlantic Council move forward, and they are still working on that. That group never really completed its task here at the Commission.

MR. HYATT: Thank you, Bob, I'm not as forgetful as I had feared.

CHAIR WARE: Marty Gary.

MR. MARTIN GARY: Like Maryland, well like Mike, and Eric from Rhode Island, Joe, our for-hire sector has been strongly advocating to

explore mode splits, so I'm also going to be opposed to this motion.

CHAIR WARE: All right, seeing no other hands, I'm going to do a one-minute caucus, because I know states have some folks online, so we'll do a one-minute caucus then come back and vote. Okay, I appreciate everyone's patience, particularly with Maine, as we might have been the last ones here. Is everyone ready to vote on this? We'll first see those in favor of the motion, so that would be excluding mode split options, raise your hand.

MS. FRANKE: Okay, **in favor of the motion I have Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia.**

CHAIR WARE: **All those opposed.**

MS. FRANKE: Okay, **opposed I have Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, D.C., PRFC, Maryland, Delaware, Maine, and that's it.**

CHAIR WARE: **Any abstentions?**

MS. FRANKE: **For abstentions I have NOAA Fisheries and New Hampshire and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

CHAIR WARE: **Any null votes? Motion fails 4 to 9 with 3 abstentions.** This is including mode split options in the Draft Addendum III.

MS. FRANKE: One further clarification now that we have mode splits for the PDT To consider. Does the Board have any guidance about where you want to see these mode split options? I heard Mr. Luisi talk about the bag limit, potentially for a mode split option. Are there other types? Are you looking for mode split options for size limits, different size limits for different modes? Are you looking for different seasons for different modes? If you have any other thoughts at this time that would be helpful.

CHAIR WARE: Any thoughts for the Plan Development Team on further guidance on mode splits? Yes, Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I just wanted to clarify. The motion to initiate this Addendum does not consider recreational possession limit changes, so you just raised that Emilie as a potential place for a mode split. But in my understanding of the motion that initiated this Addendum, possession limit changes are not in the Draft Addendum.

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Nichola. I'm just going to read that part, this is the motion Nichola is referring to, it is the motion from the December Board meeting. It says that options should include, if needed, a range of overall reductions, consideration of recreational versus commercial contributions to the reductions, recreational season and size limit changes, taking into account regional availability. The motion does not specify possession limit changes, but it says option to include, so I think it's potentially open.

MS. MESERVE: That is not my understanding of the motion that I voted for back in December. I thought it was pretty specific as to what was included here, and it does not include changes to the bag limit.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: It's up to the Board. You know if the Board feels this motion has some room for changes to possession limits or other things, and then they can do that. I think the way these motions usually work is this is kind of a starting point, and we bring things back.

More questions back from the Plan Development Team, and that is kind of where we are. If the Board wants to change some things through another motion, they have the flexibility to do that. It's up to the Board, more than a staff interpretation it's the Board's interpretation of how they want to handle it.

CHAIR WARE: I think one approach, Nichola, is we have a topic of other measures, we can bring possession limits up under that topic if you would like. All right, any other discussion on mode splits? Yes, Roy Miller.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Very quickly, I can see considering mode splits for daily harvest limits, but I really fail to understand the reason for mode splits with regard to size limits.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Roy, Jay.

DR. McNAMEE: Yes, this sort of in response to Roy, not helpful to you guys. I think the idea would be, just to offer an example. I think often party and charter for-hire, whatever, they will often lean towards a larger fish, because they can pursue those fish, they know where they are. What they might want to do, if there is an option with a really constrained season, they might opt into a much larger fish to get a reduction from that and keep the season open. It's sort of why I said what I said earlier. You shouldn't listen to me for like what they might want.

I'm just offering you things that I've heard. But I would think you would want to keep minimum sizes in the mix. I wonder if there was a way to get some feedback, if the PDT could reach out to some party and charter operations to get some feedback on things they might like to see. I don't know that we're going to be able. We probably should have done that before this meeting, but I'm trying to find a way to narrow things down for you guys but keep this in there. I don't have a good way to do that.

CHAIR WARE: All right, I saw Matt Gates, Roy Miller and then we're going to move on to the next topic.

MR. MATTHEW GATES: Yes, I think I'm sure Jay covered most of what I want to say. The only additional thing, I wasn't really interested in pursuing the possession limit or the bag limit change. I think my primary thought was the

season for the mode split, but definitely not a possession limit.

CHAIR WARE: Roy Miller, you get the last bite of the apple on this.

MR. MILLER: Just very quickly, thinking about other examples of mode splits, with regard to size limits. The only one I can think of right off the top of my head was summer flounder. A couple of states, I think it was New Jersey and Connecticut have a smaller size limit for shore-based fishermen catching summer flounder. That is the only example I can think of, and I'm not sure that that even correlates with what we're talking about, in terms of striped bass.

CHAIR WARE: I think we've had a good discussion on mode splits here. I am going to move us on to our next topic, which is the recreational size limits, and there were several questions in the PDT memo to the Board. Those are up on the screen now, so I'll let folks read this, but looking for any guidance on recreational size limit options. Doug Grout.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: I would like to include both slot limits and a couple of minimum size limits. I still would like to have explored a lower slot limit that would be no larger, or a minimum of at least three inches in width. You could have it at whatever width, but as far as how low it would go; I would like to have it targeted away from the existing spawning stock biomass.

This would be for coastal size limits or slot limits. I can give an example of 20 to 26, but if the TC and PDT look and see that, well to protect our last spawning stock strong year class we have to go down lower. I would like to see what the analysis would be for that. As far as large minimum size limits, I would say anywhere between 36 and 40. I think that covers it for size limits on the coast.

MS. FRANKE: Just clarifying that the PDT will pursue that analysis for the less than 28 inches for the ocean as a slot. I'll do that.

CHAIR WARE: Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: A question, I mean hasn't that already been done? Haven't we had kind of a recommendation that that is a bad idea?

DR. DREW: The TC did some preliminary analyses with this, and felt that showed that going down to a lower size limit in the ocean or lower slot in the ocean would increase removals, and I think we got a lot of public comment that people had concerns about the analysis. This was an analysis that the TC had not really tried before.

I think maybe what the Board could consider is if you would like to see if we could do some more due diligence on this topic, so that we can refine our methods, as far as either verify or find out that we were wrong originally, and see if we can get a reduction out of this. I think the TC has some plans to develop these methods further, to get a better handle on what those reductions would look like.

Maybe even revisit some other assumptions that Board members and the public had concerns about, so we can kind of refine this approach. But it was initially, the initial analysis was not promising, in terms of getting a reduction, and that was even before we consider, you know the potential loss of spawning potential by focusing harvest on small fish.

MR. CIMINO: Yes, just a follow, I appreciate that. I guess folks don't realize this, but as New Jersey goes through calculations for what the Striped Bass Bonus Program would look like. We've reviewed this within the state, and obviously we're talking about a state with a lot of fishing power. That loss of spawning potential is pretty intense, so basically the penalties of that have always kept us away from

this. I do worry that we've already had some suggestions that this is not good. New Jersey has explored this, and you know we're a pretty considerable player, that out of the things that we could cut out, I think we should really consider not looking at this once again.

CHAIR WARE: I'm hearing some differing opinions on exploring a slot under 28 inches. Any other Board discussion on that? Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I agree with Joe. I have a lot of concerns about going to that smaller slot limit. I would also remind the Board that our Advisory Panel, which hardly agrees on anything altogether, it's usually 9 to 9, 9 to 8 type votes. This is the one issue that they were unanimous on, I believe, when they talked about it for a Board action item. I don't support our looking at it in this Draft Addendum.

CHAIR WARE: Doug Grout, do you want another comment on this?

MR. GROUT: Yes, just a follow up on that. You know the main purpose of this, we have spawning stock biomass that is going to start shrinking in size. Protecting smaller fish that are always very weak in strength is also, if you start targeting those your catches, they have to go down. Yes, there will be an impact on that three inch or whatever size limit.

But I think we've got to do our best at the situation that we are in right now, at least consider a smaller slot limit on the coast. Now, if it comes up after the TC's analysis that this just is a totally bad idea I'm fine. But the original analysis was originally done very rapidly, and I appreciate them taking the time when we've given them a huge workload to try and come up with something.

But it wasn't using some of the current length frequencies that we have in the Volunteer Angler Survey Programs. If they could use that, which is more what is in the system right now,

as opposed to what happened back in, what was the timeframe year using, like 2008?

DR. DREW: We were using 2018 as a proxy for when the 2011-year class was 7 years old.

MR. GROUT: Right, that is what I am trying to get is a new analysis using the more current empirical data that we have, as to what the impacts might be.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, so we have an ask from a Board member to include a slot limit less than 28 inches. If this is something someone cannot live with, or is strongly opposed to, now would be the time for a motion. Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: I would move to remove this as an option from this Addendum. I appreciate what you said, and I do think the idea that it needs to be, well the idea that a better analysis would be helpful is important. But we know going forward, when we get past this benchmark that the whole idea of what striped bass management is, is going to change. That may be a better time to have that discussion than in this interim, I think. I would move to have this removed from this current Amendment.

CHAIR WARE: I'm just going to have staff put that up on the board, then I'll have you read it into the record. All right, do you want to read that in, Joe?

MR. CIMINO: Yes, thank you. **Move to not include options for an ocean recreational size limit under 28 inches in Draft Addendum III.**

CHAIR WARE: Do we have a second to that motion? Nichola Meserve. Joe, do you want to provide any rationale or are you good? Nichola? Yes, go for it.

MS. MESERVE: Overall I am a little bit hesitant about any changes to the size limits right now in this Draft Addendum. The Technical Committee had some pretty strong words about how the

changes in the selectivity are adding uncertainty to the work that they are doing to the stock assessment for the projections.

I hesitate to have much drastic movement in the size limits at this point, in terms of, you know compliance and enforcement as well. But if we can narrow it down to a reasonable set of options that exclude this. I think that is at least a step towards a little bit more certainty.

CHAIR WARE: Any more discussion on this motion? Jay.

DR. McNAMEE: Yes, just quickly. I'm going to support the motion here, not that I didn't appreciate Doug's reasoning. But I think there is an added element here that is concerning to me, and that is kind of focusing the fishery now on sub-mature fish or a high proportion of sub-mature fish seems like, I don't know it adds a lot of uncertainty that we're not going to know for some period of time, so it doesn't seem like a good idea. I am going to support the motion.

CHAIR WARE: Seeing no other hands, we'll do a one-minute caucus again, and the negative motions are for this, so I'll just say a motion in favor is to not include a slot limit under 28 inches, a motion opposed would include that, so one-minute caucus. All right, is everyone ready? Again, I think as we move forward, we're going to try and avoid negative motions, because they are very confusing.

But again, a motion in favor does not include a slot limit under 28 inches, a motion opposed would include a slot limit under 28 inches. That is my fault, Joe, but we'll move forward, not with negative motions. Okay, so everyone is ready to vote. Those in favor, please raise your hand.

MS. FRANKE: Okay, **in favor I have Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, D.C., PRFC, Maryland, Delaware and Maine.**

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. FRANKE: Opposed I have New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. FRANKE: Abstentions, I have NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? All right, the motion passes 13 to 1 with 2 abstentions. Is there any other discussion on rec size limits?

MS. FRANKE: Just one clarification. I heard a suggestion from Doug about only looking at slot limits that are three inches, nothing below, did I misinterpret that?

MR. GROUT: I was saying that we shouldn't have a slot limit less than three inches, but it could go larger or whatever.

MS. FRANKE: Great, thank you for clarifying. The PDT your suggestion would not look at any two-inch slot limits, for example. Okay, I'm just clarifying that suggestion is out on the table, and was wondering if any Board members had differing suggestions. Otherwise, the PDT is not going to look at any two-inch slots.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, I think we are in consensus on that. Thanks for that discussion, we're now going to move on to recreational season closures, and again there is another slide with questions. Looking for Board guidance, a lot of different actions we had at the December Commission meeting for striped bass. Doug Grout, do you want to start us off?

MR. GROUT: One of the concepts when we're talking about equity, I know a lot of times we're going to be looking at, okay what is the reduction in harvest and combined with what's the reduction of catch and release mortality as a percentage. One concept that I would like to see if the Board would be willing to explore, particularly if we start going down the road of no target, is the concept that when people are

recreational fishing, they are out for a recreational fishing opportunity, whether we have a catch and release fishery or if we have a one-fish per day.

In some cases, the availability of striped bass in certain states is much shorter than in other states. For example, in the state of New Hampshire, if we put in a one-month no target closure, that is a 25 percent reduction in the ability to go fishing for striped bass. Quite frankly, in our state there probably isn't a lot of alternatives during the summer other than mackerel, and they're overfished too.

You compare that to some states that may have the availability of striped bass in their waters up to 10 months. If they take a one-month closure for no targeting, that is only a 10 percent reduction in the ability to go fishing for striped bass. I would like that concept, if the rest of the Commission would support this, at least put in the document as a type of analysis that would say, this is what would more equity might be in fishing opportunities. Am I clear on that? I'm not sure.

CHAIR WARE: Those on the webinar, we were just having a discussion at the head of the table.

MS. FRANKE: Sorry, we were just having a sidebar to clarify what you were thinking. You're thinking, looking at options where, I guess for regions, let's say a region typically their average season is a couple months, and for another region their average season is 10 months. You're looking at closing the same proportion of their season, so like 25 percent of the northern region season and closing 25 percent of the southern region season.

MR. GROUT: Yes, and also there has been talk in the previous Addendum of looking at the state-by-state impact too, of the reductions we're looking at, just like we're looking at reductions in harvest and catch and release mortality. We should also be looking, particularly with the concept of no target

closures. What is the impact, the percent reduction in the ability to go fishing, because they are going to be different between states?

MS. FRANKE: Just to clarify, you're looking for, you know if the Addendum had regional closures, obviously the Addendum would show the percent reduction in each region, but you would also be looking for some context. What does that mean, also state-by-state?

MR. GROUT: Yes.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, so we have one concept of equity from Doug, other hands. Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I apologize to Doug more than anyone, but I think what he's describing kind of gets towards conservation equivalency, which was killed. I hope just not at this time, but I think that is kind of the discussion that is being proposed.

MS. FRANKE: I guess to Joe and Doug's comments, for me to clarify. I guess one question is, are either of you proposing state-by-state closures, or Doug, are you proposing still looking at regional closures, but understanding just having the calculations next to it showing the impact by state, or were you looking for state-by-state closures?

MR. GROUT: No, I wasn't looking for state-by-state closures at all. I just was looking at in the analysis, what is going to be the impact from a state-by-state basis? Just as I've heard asked in the previous Addendum that we needed to look at what is the impact on harvest and catch and release mortality on a state-by-state basis, even if they're in a big region?

MS. FRANKE: Was that helpful, Joe? Okay. The PDT will look at regional options and look at the percent reductions, for example, and each region sort of on the side provide also the state-by-state reductions for context.

CHAIR WARE: Adam Nowalsky.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: I completely understand, Doug, what you're talking about with regards to differing levels of equity. It is easy for us to sit here and say, everybody is going to make a similar level of contributions to conservation. Everybody is going to take a 10 percent cut; we're going to achieve that by changing size or limiting seasons or whatever it is. But a similar change in contribution to conservation does not mean equity in all levels, including access. In Doug's example he was saying, if you implemented a one-month ocean closure, that would eliminate 25 percent of its seasonal access, while in other states it might only be a 10 percent limit on their seasonal access. Most people would probably look at that and say wow, you took 25 percent of my access to the fishery away, while you only took 10 percent of his away, regardless of what that max act would be on paper as a percent on pounds, SSB, F.

That is very different impact. The challenge here, I think, for the PDT in this, is that it is not just limited to a state or regional level, it exists in comparison for modes, shore-based angler, private boat anglers, for-hire anglers. This challenge exists within modes, within those that are truly interested in access to the resource from a sport perspective, versus those that are interested in it from a harvest perspective.

The challenge here to the PDT, you're looking for additional definitions of equity. The original motion that the Board passed talked about socioeconomic or other factors. This is what I think ultimately, we're looking for solutions for; to initially say we want everybody to provide an equal contribution to conservation.

That is our starting point for equity. But then we have to look at, what does this do in terms of access and the economics of those fishermen, the retailers, the area boat sales. You get a more comprehensive picture of what that equity is. This is support for what you're saying, Doug. This builds upon it a little bit, and I hope this gives some more context about what

I hope options can ultimately be in this Addendum, to say, we considered this in the name of equity.

MS. FRANKE: I'm going to just quickly respond. I think that is helpful, maybe for the PDT in terms of a place to start. We have this concept of maybe an equal reduction by region, but then if we look at, for example, how long the seasons are or what the availability is like for different regions, sort of try to take that into account.

Maybe that is a different option, and then maybe you have an option that is looking at, you know we have the data for MRIP directed trips, so what portion of directed trips are occurring within a particular season closure. Maybe that sort of gets at the socioeconomic point as well. Maybe sort of the PDT can look at a few different sorts of concepts of equity here, and come back to the Board with what they've discussed.

CHAIR WARE: Dennis.

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: Everything you said, Adam, I agree with. But looking at the situation that we have in New Hampshire, this is somewhat similar to what we talked about in lobsters, the effect that it has on people. In our state, where we have such a short fishing season, a month closure might prompt people to stop fishing, might stop people from buying boats.

They might say that, you know if they are going to lose June and July fishing, what is the point? They don't have a lot of alternatives. I've heard people speak about that. You know it would have a devastating effect on the amount of people that are going fishing, which would be good for conservation, but not good for their economics or the pleasure of people who enjoy recreational fishing. It's a tough nut to consider, but I think that it is worth considering.

CHAIR WARE: I would like to have the Board focus a little bit on some of the seasonal options, in terms of like a coastwide season, state-by-state season. We heard no state-by-state from one Board member, regional. I think there were a lot of different options at the December Striped Bass Board meeting, and that would be helpful guidance for the PDT. Nichola, you want to work on that?

MS. MESERVE: I'll try, I think there are a lot of topics there to cover. Generally, the historical approach for striped bass management has been one of coastwide consistency as much as possible. We have the same size limits and bag limits along the coast right now. That is really difficult when it comes to seasonal closures though, because of the migration of this fish.

But generally, my interest is in the largest regions as possible that achieves enough equity for us to live with, while balancing consistency across adjacent border states, so that measures don't differ between many states when it comes to closures, because that will erode the conservation benefit if you can go to the neighboring state and fish, when you can't in your own state, as well as compliance and enforcement as well.

Generally, the smallest number of regions as possible. I think that a coastwide closure is nearly off the table, unless it were split between two different waves, so that it does impact different regions differently. I think that might be one way to consider a uniform set of closures along the coast where one hits the north in one way and one hits the south in another way.

But that doesn't speak to my support for the PDT to consider closures that do split between two waves. I did have interest in exploring the Maine through Rhode Island and then Connecticut south regions that we discussed at the last Board meeting, and I am opposed to having a single state be a region.

CHAIR WARE: Other Board guidance on the topic of recreational season closures. Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I appreciate Nichola's comments, I know she has listened to this quite a bit. I appreciate that Rhode Island was moved. I am curious, to folks south of New Jersey, I do worry about what the idea of a Delaware south reduction would mean. The idea of a season that works for Connecticut all the way down.

I'm just curious on input there. I don't want to put into it, I could absolutely live with Connecticut south. I think Connecticut through New Jersey especially the vast majority of fish in that New York/New Jersey area, I think we need very much to be on the same page. Just curious what happens south of us, and if there are thoughts about a difference even.

CHAIR WARE: To summarize what I heard is, probably coastwide is a no go, unless it is a split between two waves. I've not heard any support for a single state closure, so each state having a different season. I've heard support for the regional options that were explored in December; Maine through Rhode Island, Connecticut south, and then Joe proposing maybe splitting up that southern region into two. Any other thoughts on this? I'm sure I've missed something, but that is kind of what I've heard. Marty.

MR. GARY: I think if you go around the table everybody will give you their perspective on what region works best. Selfishly, from New York's perspective, I think Connecticut, because we found each other on the side of Long Island Sound. I think I totally agree with Joe. That fall run of fish, at least for now, spatially they're inhabiting Wave 6 in our waters, and we have to be together. I think I would advocate for a region Connecticut to New Jersey to be included in this.

CHAIR WARE: Anything else?

MS. FRANKE: I think the only question left on this slide that hasn't been explicitly addressed is the last bullet. This is the sort of assumption. You know the TC Report with all the options operate on the assumption that you are trying to find the shortest closure possible to achieve the reduction. But that does mean the closure would occur during the peak of fishing activity.

If the Board has any concerns about that or recommendations for other ways to see if you should think about it, beside saving the most number of fish, the most fish per day, it will be helpful. Otherwise, I think the PDT would proceed with looking at the shortest possible closures to get you the reduction.

CHAIR WARE: Doug, Roy Miller and then we're going to move on to the last topic.

MR. GROUT: I would hope that that would not be the only option, the shortest possible closure. I would hope that there would be some other options that may be a little bit longer. But clearly, the shortest possible closure in some places might be July. While we could accomplish the same thing in different parts of the season.

CHAIR WARE: Roy Miller, last comment on this.

MR. MILLER: I'm just remembering when we had to institute mid-summer closures for summer flounder, it was grossly unpopular. You wouldn't believe some of the calls we got at our office and some of the threats we received. The reason was, you've taken those two weeks and you've done away with my vacation recreation, because that is when we go on vacation.

What I'm saying is, a closure in July or August may have a vastly different socioeconomic impact than a closure in April, for instance. We need to keep that in mind. I guess I agree with the comment that the shortest possible closure doesn't capture it all. I think we need more flexibility than that.

CHAIR WARE: Marty Gary, one more bite at the apple here?

MR. GARY: Again, we could dice the regions up as much as possible, but I did mess it up a little bit. In a perfect world we do have the Block Island Transit Area, which is challenging. But I also realize probably Maine south to Mass might make a similar argument to have Rhode Island in their region. I don't know if it's too much to try to look at both of those scenarios or not, but maybe a recalibrated region would be Rhode Island to Jersey.

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to move us on to Other Measures. This would be possession limits, if folks want to talk about that. I've heard other Board members with some ideas as well, so this is an attempt at that discussion. Okay, Nichola then Mike.

MS. MESERVE: I have a new topic that is not the possession limit, so I don't know if you want to deal with that issue first or not.

CHAIR WARE: I'll take whatever topic you have.

MS. MESERVE: I have a topic to introduce, I would like to include an option that standardizes the method of taking a total length measurement for striped bass for compliance with the size limits. As we all know, the FMP establishes total length as our method of measurement for striped bass, but it doesn't really define how that measurement is taken.

What I mean is that the caudal fin, the tail, in some of our regulations it says we pinch the tail, in some of them it says you leave it natural. What we have found in our state, we started to get reports of this. Once a maximum size is put in place in the recreational fishery, is that because of the way that our rule is kind of vague about pinching the tail or not, the anglers are forcibly fanning out the tail, in order to keep it in the slot limit.

We actually did some sampling in the fall, sampled hundreds of striped bass for a pinch tail measurement, a natural tail measurement and then a fanned tail measurement, and found that you could take almost a 32.5-inch striped bass and get it into the slot limit by fanning out that tail. I've looked at some of the state rules, and the majority of the states do either seem to have it in their regulations or in your recreational fishing guides that the method of measurement should be a pinched tail, but it's not uniform.

DMF has initiated a rulemaking for this year to go to that pinch tail measurement for striped bass, but it is consistent. I believe that is also how samples are measured for commercial market sampling in our states, so I think it would be most consistent with the stock assessment and provide for uniformity along the coast.

Now particularly as the focus on the size limits in striped bass is this key to our management, our conservation approach right now. I think that this difference has an opportunity to really erode the conservation benefit of our size limit. I would like to include this as something for the Plan Development Team to consider standardizing the method of measurement of total length.

CHAIR WARE: Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: I have an idea. It's something that has been rumbling around in my head for a while. After the last meeting when we decided not to take action, and we decided as a Board to begin to work on an Addendum. I started to think back over the last 10 years, and all of the different actions that we've taken as a Board and as states.

When I go back and look and do that review, in the state of Maryland since 2015, we have taken 8 different regulatory actions, either to reduce size limits or increase size limits, or implement seasonal closures. We have no

harvest closures, we have no targeting closures, catch and release seasons, harvest seasons all throughout the 365 days that makes up a year in the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. The combination of all of those rules as they have stacked upon themselves over the past 10 years, has gotten us to the point where we think that this Addendum is an opportunity for us.

Not just Maryland, but for other states to potentially take a step back and consider whether or not a new baseline could be developed that would be initiated through this Addendum, and would carry on as that new baseline moving forward through the benchmark assessment and forward. What I mean by a baseline is a consideration of the different types of effort controls that we have in place.

We have catch and release or no harvest seasons. We have no targeting seasons and we have harvest seasons all scattered throughout as I mentioned. What we would like to do as a state is to hit pause for a second, work internally, so the request of the Board to consider with this idea, would not put any additional work at this time on the Plan Development Team.

My team back at work would work on trying to develop this new baseline, for which we could carry things forward. The reason why I think this is important, and something that we should be thinking about, and I'm hoping that the Board would approve, I guess you could say, our state working on this and developing its own. It would basically be another section within the Addendum that would address the establishment of a baseline.

I think it's important that we as managers respond to new information. There was some really great work done over the past few years, Massachusetts catch and release mortality study that we've heard presented to this group.

We also have the working group that was looking at discard mortality in the fishery.

As we've applied all of these different rule changes over time, I think we can do a better job in our state protecting the resource by implementing those effort controls in a way that is more meaningful than the way they are currently outlined in our regulations. I've spoken to Megan and a handful of you over the last couple of weeks, kind of pitching this concept of being able to do this work and present it back to the Board in May, before it goes out to the public.

What we would not be discussing with this baseline readjustment are things like our slot limit. Our slot limit, we would want to maintain that consistency with the other Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions. Whatever seasonal changes that might be required through Addendum III, they would be added on to the new baseline, rather than adding more to the last 10 years of piecing things together.

I hope that this Board, with the discussions that we've had today about trying to be able to respond to the management, and to what we know about the fishery, and where we could implement meaningful measures, would be something that you would support us working on, with the idea that we would come back or this would be presented in the Draft Document in May.

I think the Board would have an opportunity to review what we've prepared, and decide at that time whether or not it is something with whether or not you would be comfortable sending out to the public for comment. I hope to be able to have that work done within our Agency, and with our stakeholders.

The idea would be to form a committee of recreational, commercial, charter, this that, you name them, they will be part of this group to help guide us and inform us as we work through this Addendum process. I am happy to answer

questions if anyone has any questions. Again, this is a concept. We haven't started the work, because I didn't want to get things started before the Board was comfortable with us taking this approach.

CHAIR WARE: I'm just going to ask some clarifying questions to help the conversation, if that's okay. I heard you talk about catch and release seasons, no targeting, harvest seasons. Are you focused on realigning all state seasons? Is that your focus, or are there measures?

MR. LUISI: It would be the seasons. I'll give you an example. I think an example would be helpful. We have a no targeting season closure in the spring. There are benefits to that, but that period of closure that we have in the spring is a six-week time period for when nobody can access striped bass, the resource is off limits.

We would like to be able to have the conversation with our stakeholders, and then have the ability to potentially readjust that season, and maybe let's just say we add more time in the summer to our closure period in the summer, when we know that the meaningful benefit of reduced dead discard during that time is going to be better for the stock than that closure in the spring.

We want to be able to have the ability to make those adjustments, and to kind of slide the pieces around to create a season that is equivalent to the conservation effort that we have now. But it is a readjustment of all of these pieces of the puzzle that have been lumped together for quite some time.

At the end of the day, if we cannot come to some agreement with our stakeholders, we will be the first to come back to this table and say, we were not able to reach something that everyone could live with, therefore we will stick with our status quo. We just want to have the ability to be able to work on something to present back to this Board, before it goes out to the public.

MS. FRANKE: Just a clarification from a staff perspective in terms of what this means for the Addendum. I think what I'm hearing you say is, you know currently Maryland has a season that is in place this year, a current recreational season. From a PDT perspective, you know for striped bass management documents we'll have the status quo option.

Usually, a striped bass management document would say, typically the past few documents have said, you know states maintain their recreational seasons from 2024. Of course, for this document we'll have options where states would have seasonal closures sort of on top of their current season. It sounds like what you're proposing is that regardless of whether or not the Board actually takes a reduction, you're saying for sort of the status quo.

Maryland would like to potentially modify their status quo season. You would modify your status quo season, and of course if there was a reduction you would take whatever the reduction is on top of that, that you're looking to modify your status quo baseline season, instead of having to keep your current season. Is that what I think?

MR. LUISI: That's correct.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you for that clarification. Let's have a Board discussion on this idea. Doug Groul.

MR. GROUT: Doesn't that sound like conservation equivalency under a new name? Really, you're just changing your seasons to make them equally conservative, but something that the public may or may not be more in favor of. If that is the case, isn't that really just putting a new name on something that isn't currently permitted? I like the idea, but I don't think it's permitted under the plan, at least the actual mechanics of it.

MS. FRANKE: Right, so currently conservation equivalency is not permitted, which would be, if

you have an Addendum that has a measure that's what has to be implemented. A state can't say, we're going to do something different than what the Addendum says. But the Board can choose to include whatever they would like in the Addendum, so if this were in the Addendum, you know that would be a measure that could be implemented.

CHAIR WARE: I've got quite a list here. Let's start with Dennis Abbott.

MR. ABBOTT: I just listened to Mike Luisi's proposal and it's probably a good proposal, but I don't think it should be part of what we're working on now on this Addendum. I don't know if it would put us in cross purposes. I don't know if it would delay anything in whatever we're doing.

I would suggest that Maryland go ahead in their own singular effort, and come up with whatever they want and present it to the Board at some point in time. But I just don't think it gets us to October as easily as it should. I'm not in favor of us waiting for a proposal from Maryland in May to have entered into this Addendum. I don't think it's a great idea. But it is a great idea to give it some thought.

MR. BORDEN: I agree with Dennis' point. You know I raised this whole issue of timing and the need to meet the October deadline. Throughout this discussion, every time somebody hangs another ornament on the tree, I think to myself, what types of delays are we going to get exposed to? If every state does this and then wants the Technical Committee to review it, we'll never meet our deadline.

I don't see how we can possibly do that. I'm opposed to including it in the Addendum. I have no objections if Mike wants to pursue it individually as a state agency, and then present those results, and maybe we can develop a model that we could add into a subsequent Addendum. But I am opposed to including it in this one.

CHAIR WARE: Marty Gary.

MR. GARY: Yes, I understand where Mike is coming from after spending 37 years down there and understanding the fisheries. Spatially/temporally I think in essence Mike is looking for some commonsense opportunity to shift and provide enhanced conservation where it is most needed, and maybe provide opportunities in other areas where it was.

These are, I think tools that all of us hope we can implement. The only question for my mind, so I understand where Mike is going, I'm supportive of that. The only concern I had was what Dennis and David said, how does it fit into our Addendum III process? Maybe, I guess where I land is in concurrence with Dennis and David. Let them go ahead and do that exploration with their stakeholders and bring it back to us, if that works.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, so I guess to that timeline piece. If Maryland were to consider changing their baseline status quo season, obviously that might impact any new seasonal closures on top of that. I think in order to meet having a draft for May, DNR would have to provide that analysis to the PDT in a couple of weeks, like in the next few weeks, so that the PDT could include that in options. I think that would be if DNR could provide that analysis for inclusion in the options that is the only way we could meet the timeline.

CHAIR WARE: Pat Geer and then Nichola.

MR. PATRICK GEER: I've already talked to Mike's staff about some of these things and Dennis, I had the same concerns with that. What happens if all the states do this? I see where Mike is coming from on this. The question I have for Mike is, I'm assuming that you go through these measures and you would still meet the goals and reductions that we've done to date. That would be the ultimate goal. Your staff would be able to show that whatever

you do would still meet all the reductions we've done so far.

MR. LUISI: Yes.

CHAIR WARE: Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I'm curious to see what Maryland might propose here, in terms of trying to put its no targeting closures in the place where release mortality is the worst. That makes a lot of sense. I'm interested to see what you can bring forward, provided it can be integrated without slowing down the rest of the Addendum. I think that's it.

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to go to Emerson and then Mike, I'll come to you.

MR. EMERSON C. HASBROUCK: In theory I support what Maryland would like to do. I just don't know if this is the right time and place to do that. I'm thinking that of the eight regulatory measures that Mike mentioned and Maryland has had to implement since 2015. Those were all probably relative to reductions that were required during that time period.

Some of those measures, as I recall going back to 2015, included conservation equivalency to meet the required reduction. If Maryland then is going to kind of go back and reconfigure the actions that they put in place through conservation equivalency to meet reductions, then we're getting into conservation equivalency, which we're not supposed to do at this point in time. But then also, the Board has to approve any conservation equivalency. Each of those individual items as I see it has to come back to us for approval as conservation equivalency, but if we're not looking at conservation equivalency it's kind of a circular argument here. I applaud what Maryland wants to do, I just don't know if this is the right time.

CHAIR WARE: Mike and then Jay.

MR. LUISI: To a couple of the points. The first is, for anyone who is concerned that this proposal and the work that we would do would slow things down at all, that shouldn't be something you would be concerned about. We will pull the concept out of the Addendum before it starts to delay anything, if that is your major concern about this.

If we can't do the work on our end quickly enough, we'll stop, and we'll wait until another opportunity arises for this. The reason I'm bringing this up today is because this is the first time in a while where we have done an addendum with a little bit of time built in, so that we're not rapid fire reacting to some value or some catch estimate or something from an assessment, where we're trying to take action within a matter of weeks or months after that information is available.

This is an opportunity to rethink all of the actions that we've taken over the course of the last ten years. It will not slow things down. I don't see it as a conservation equivalency. The way I understand conservation equivalency is that the Board directs states to achieve a certain level of reduction and then we go home and craft something to bring back, in order to achieve that level of reduction.

We're not striving to achieve any level of reduction with this project. This would be to try to find something equivalent to what we have that we can reestablish at that baseline. My question to the Board is, for ten years we've been adding on and adding on and adding on to the rules that we have, which has created a very complicated array of what you can catch, when you can fish, when you can't fish, what type of bait you can use, what type of hooks you can have, how many trolling rods can you have on the boat at one time.

It's gotten a little out of control. My question to the Board is, if we can't do this now, now that we have a year ahead of us in order to get something done, when are we going to have the

ability to do it? We can't do conservation equivalency to make the adjustments. I've been asking for two years, I think, when the opportunity may arise.

I've been told by staff and by others that when there is an Addendum you can propose something in an Addendum, because it is not officially conservation equivalency, and so here I am today presenting this idea, planning to come back to you guys in May, or I guess as Emilie mentioned maybe this is work that, I had April 15th kind of in my mind, as when we would need to have information to staff.

If it's earlier than that, then we'll have to try to work under a more condensed timeline. But I just don't know where we go from here. If there is no ability to modify anything, given all the new information that we have about catch and release mortality. There are all these fish dying because of climate change and environmental conditions are driving mortality in certain places at certain times. If we can't make any changes then I don't know why we're here. This is why we're here, to have these discussions, and to try to be creative to build a fishery for my state.

I'm looking to build a fishery that meets all of the needed levels of conservation, but provides access so that the individuals most affected by the rules that we made can find some time to get on the water to make a few bucks, so that they can keep their business going over the course of the next few years, until we reach the benchmark, and then maybe we'll have to rethink all this all over again.

That is the last I'll say, I hope I cleared up questions that people had in their mind. I'm happy to answer any more questions. Sorry I don't have the details for you yet. But if the Board thinks we can still work on something like this and present it, we would be happy to do what the Board suggests.

CHAIR WARE: Mike, while you have the mic, I have two clarifying questions for you. Are you thinking of readjusting both Bay and Ocean seasons, and is it recreational and commercial or just recreational or just commercial?

MR. LUISI: We would be focused on the Bay, and we also have discussed with our commercial industry bringing them in as well, to think through what their seasons look like when fish are available for certain years, when it may not be a reasonable approach to continue fishing in the dead of the summer, when all other recreational fisheries are closed to striped bass fishing. We want to have those conversations with the commercial industry too. But the focus right now is Bay recreational, but the commercial, they will be part of that open discussion as well.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks for the clarification. I have Jay and then Dennis, and then we're going to assess where we're at and if we need a motion.

DR. McNAMEE: You know I find myself most aligned with what Nichola offered earlier. I am kind of curious about this, might just give us some confidence that he thinks with some criteria they can get this done and if not, they will kind of hold off, so that is good that answer, you know that concern that I had.

I was just thinking, you know there may be some benefit to the rest of us in the precedent. You know I think Maryland has probably the most intricate regulations, so this is most relevant for them. But you get stuck in this, you know when you are kind of boxed in like that you get stuck, and Mike, I can see that.

Having an opportunity to kind of like just get out of that pit that you're in, to kind of relook at things. Because when you get kind of trapped with this inertia of your regulations, the environment is changing, right, and so you just kind of keep propagating things that you've been doing, when the situation may have

changed out on the water. I like the idea of kind of pulling back, reanalyzing everything, getting at some of these other ideas that we've talked about like discard mortality concept and things like that. Maybe there is some way that they can look at it to reduce that, so I'm supportive of that. I might come back to this, I know you're trying to move off this, so I'm going to stop and then maybe raise my hand again in a little bit.

CHAIR WARE: Dennis and then we're going to assess where we're at.

MR. ABBOTT: I surely can't match Mike's eloquence in presenting points as he does. But again, I'm going to reiterate the fact that we're doing an Addendum, and I think inserting one state into providing input at this point in time does not get us to our Colberg. I would like to see Mike move ahead with what he's doing and bring that back, and maybe at some point in time we have to reanalyze how we're managing striped bass, because it sure has been taking us in different directions.

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to assess where we're at here. I've heard lots of different opinions on this. At this point I'm taking it that we have a request from Maryland to add this topic to the Addendum. Is there anyone that is opposed to or cannot live with that addition? I would just be looking for a hand. I'm not asking for a vote; I'm trying to assess if we need a motion. If you are strongly opposed or cannot live with the Maryland proposal to add this, raise your hand. You have a question, David Borden.

MR. BORDEN: If we proceed down this road, when is this Board going to see a document from Mike? My assumption is the next follow up question is, you need a date, I think. Then the follow up question is, are we then going to task the same technical people that we're asking to do this other work with analyzing this, or are we just going to accept whatever they bring forward?

MS. FRANKE: I can maybe start to speak to that. I think if Maryland DNR can provide the PDT with their proposed new baseline season in the next few weeks, the PDT could potentially incorporate it into their calculation of options. If the Board is not comfortable with that, and would like the PDT to move ahead with the assumption that Maryland is not changing the status quo season. Sort of have this Maryland proposal separately come to the Board also in May, and then the PDT could potentially combine it with the other options after the May meeting.

That is an option as well. I think the Board could ask the TC to review the analysis if needed, but it is just sort of a matter of, is the Board comfortable with Maryland proposing an analysis in the next month and the PDT sort of rolling that analysis into their development of options for any additional reductions, or does the Board want to see the Maryland analysis separately in May, alongside an Addendum that just assumes Maryland season would be the same?

CHAIR WARE: Just to clarify, I'm not anticipating a Board meeting between now and May. You would not see that analysis or the TC review until May, which is fine if we're trying to wait until August to go out for public comment then. Just acknowledging some of the time constraints. Eric Reid.

MR. REID: I'm just trying to understand what exactly the product Maryland is going to produce for the Board. Is it going to be a baseline of measures that are by consent accepted by all the stakeholders, or is it going to be, we couldn't come to an agreement and we don't have anything for you, or is there going to be some other giant document in the middle of that? I'm not understanding what we should expect, other than those two things.

CHAIR WARE: Mike, do you want to answer that?

MR. LUISI: Well, it won't be a giant document, I'll tell you that. It will likely be, we haven't done the work yet, but it will likely be very simple, where there will be our current season structure, taking out the size limits and bag limits, just looking at the structure of the season and what's allowed. When you wake up on February 12, what can you do today? What are you allowed to do fishing wise?

Can you keep fish? Can you catch and release them only? What are those rules, what do they look like? We will take what we have and the tradeoff being, so let's say we reopen a portion of the winter fishery and we have closed winter/spring, but we accommodate that reopening of that fishery by closing an additional two or three weeks in the summer.

That's what we're talking about. It's pieces on the board, moving those pieces in a meaningful way to reshape the structure of the fishery. It will not be a complicated analysis, because the data within the waves of what is caught, what is released. All of those data exist. We're talking about kind of looking at this wave by wave, to see what we can accomplish in a restructuring of those rules.

Therefore, that would be produced and presented by the May meeting. Like I said before, if we cannot get, I don't want to sit down with our stakeholders and then have a similar discussion that we're having now with just new rules. I forget who said it earlier, when we were talking about lobster, it might have been Dan McKiernan who said, the balls in your court.

Tell us what you need to do for lobster, in order to achieve what we're striving for. That is my plan is to go back to our stakeholders and say, tell me what we can do to make a season for you that you can live with for the next few years. There is going to have to be tradeoffs, and people are going to have to compromise.

If they can't compromise, if they are unwilling to compromise, and everybody just digs in and sets up for battle, well then, the project is over. I'll be the first person to come back to say that that was a failed experiment, given the constraints of timing that we have, and maybe that will be something that we look at in the future, but not today. I hope that we'll find success in this, but that is all to be determined, I guess.

CHAIR WARE: We had a question from Cheri.

MS. CHERI PATTERSON: Mike, this is really intriguing. However, I have a question in regards to, we just got done with a conversation pertaining to achieving reductions from a regional perspective, and there seemed to be some push back on having it a single-state perspective. I see you headed in a single-state perspective, how is that going to roll into a regional perspective of achieving reductions?

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to have Emilie answer that.

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Cheri, for bringing that up. I guess when we were talking about seasonal closures a little bit ago, I think we were sort of subconsciously maybe focused on the ocean. I did want to clarify that in the TC Report in December for the Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay options did include separate closures for Maryland and Virginia. If the Board is opposed to that you can definitely let me know.

But I think the PDT was planning to just start with what the TC Report had, which did allow Maryland and Virginia to have separate closures in the Bay, but you have regions in the ocean. If the Board is opposed to that let me know, but I apologize for not clarifying that earlier.

MS. PATTERSON: Thank you, I appreciate that.

CHAIR WARE: Doug, do you have a question?

MR. GROUT: It's not a question, it's just if this is something that is going to be moving forward, I would hope that when Maryland brings this to the PDT that they would run it by the Technical Committee, to make sure that their analysis that this is meeting our conservation goals is also something that they believe achieves it.

CHAIR WARE: We're just going to take a minute at the head of the table to chat, and we will be right back.

MS. FRANKE: Just from a staff timing perspective, we're just trying to think through. If Maryland presents an analysis with the modified baseline, and the Board wants that to go in front of the TC as well, it just becomes a question of does the PDT calculate the Chesapeake Bay closure options, assuming this new Maryland baseline, or assuming their current baseline season? I think that is the question we're just trying to grapple with as staff.

You know, assuming the TC, if the TC approves Maryland's analysis is reasonable, does the PDT calculate any new reduction seasonal closures based on this new Maryland season that the Board hasn't seen yet, or does the PDT first calculate the options based on the current Maryland season, and then we sort of see what happens with Maryland's proposal for an alternative season. That is what I'm grappling with, I guess if anyone has any thoughts of if Megan has any thoughts.

CHAIR WARE: I'm just thinking out loud. I think you might need both, because there will be an option in the Addendum, status quo for Maryland versus Option 2 is the new baseline. I don't think we would know as a Board which one we've selected until Final Action.

MS. FRANKE: What I can say is I think by May the PDT can calculate seasonal closure options for the Bay, including Maryland, based on their current season. I think based on what I've heard, there is some interest in Maryland

exploring their proposal of an alternative new status quo baseline that they can bring. Hopefully we can get it in front of the TC before the May Board meeting, and I'll talk to the PDT members to see if the Board decides at the May Board meeting that this new Maryland baseline is reasonable, how quickly we could sort of add a set of options with that new baseline. It's possible, depending on what we need to tweak in the spreadsheets. Maybe that's something we can do within a week or two of the May Board meeting and still be able to go out for public comment in late May.

If that makes sense just to reiterate, the PDT can calculate options right now using Maryland's current season. Maryland can also pursue potentially a new baseline. Then if the Board wants to move forward with this option for a new Maryland baseline, it's possible the PDT could work that into the document before it goes out for public comment, if that sounds reasonable to people.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, Matt and then we're going to assess where we're at.

MR. GATES: Thanks, Mike, for this discussion, I really appreciate that. I think maybe I would put the onus maybe on Maryland, if we're going to go forward with this, to at least coordinate with the TC and come up with, have them produce the options to put in the document that will meet the reduction required, an equivalent reduction required from their new, whatever they come up with as their new baseline.

CHAIR WARE: Ray and then we're really going to assess where we're at.

MR. RAYMOND W. KANE: I like your ideas, Mike, but I want time certain on this like we spoke earlier about the August meeting, or the annual meeting. I want time certain on this.

CHAIR WARE: I appreciate that, Ray. I don't know if that was a question to us or not, but

what I'll say is I think it is too early, for me at least, to have a vision of whether we would be ready in May or not, regardless of Maryland's proposal. Right, we have given the Plan Development Team a lot to work on.

I think they are going to try their best, and we'll see where we're at in May. Okay, so we are going to assess where we are at. At this point I'm taking that Maryland has put forward a proposal. Unless I hear someone say that they cannot live with that or are strongly opposed, we are going to assume that that is the process that we're going to move forward with. This is someone's opportunity to say that. Yes.

MR. DANIEL RYAN: I am strongly opposed to this, unless Maryland can guarantee that the six-week period from April 1 to May 15, where it states all areas are closed to striped bass fishing, if that time period remains as is, then I could support this. If this gives Maryland the flexibility to adjust that season, then I can't live with this.

CHAIR WARE: I appreciate that. I think those are some of the specifics, perhaps, that the Board would need to consider in May, so I don't have an answer for you on that now. I think it's a question of if folks need a motion on this. At this point I am not hearing that folks need a motion on this. Eric Reid.

MR. REID: I really applaud Maryland for doing this, but they can do it anytime they like. I hope you are wildly successful, because then all the rest of us are going to want to do it too. Good luck to you and Pandora and the box with that. I'm opposed to this. I think the timeline is too uncertain, the Addendum is too important, and I commend Maryland, they can do whatever they want. I would love to see the results of that. But I don't think it fits in here at all.

CHAIR WARE: To avoid a negative motion, Mike, I am going to have you make a motion to add this into the Addendum. You don't have to

make it. Someone should make a motion to add this into the Addendum, sorry, Mike.

MR. LUISI: I would be happy to make it, Megan. **I move to include the concepts of Maryland's baseline adjustment approach to Addendum III.**

CHAIR WARE: We're going to call them seasonal baseline, season closure baseline?

MR. LUISI: You call them anything you want, as long as it's not conservation equivalency.

CHAIR WARE: We'll let staff get that up on the screen, and then we'll see if there is a second. Okay, so we have a motion to include the process of the Maryland season closure baseline adjustment approach in Addendum III, is there a second to the motion? John Clark. We've had a lot of discussion on this. Has anyone not had an opportunity to speak on this? Okay, Adam, Joe, Doug, I'm going to cut you off, you've had some opportunity.

MR. GROUT: What I'm asking is, is this saying that yes, absolutely this was going to be in the Addendum without us seeing it, you know what comes out of it, or is this to consider in May that we will allow Maryland to include this new baseline? If it's saying we're giving approval to go into the Addendum right now, I'm opposed.

CHAIR WARE: I'll say what I'm thinking this motion says to me. I'm taking this motion to say, this is saying that Maryland should go and work with our constituents, and put forward a proposal that will come to the Board in May. I think it's likely that between now and May the TC would do some sort of review of that proposal.

The Plan Development Team may also work on seasonal closure options that are off of this proposal from Maryland. Certainly, the Board from my perspective, in May could always remove this from the document if you do not like what you see.

MR. LUISI: I will go as far as to say that if this doesn't end up where we need it to be by May, I will make the motion to remove it from the document, if it's not where it needs to be by the time we meet in May.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, so I think it was Adam and Joe. I'm going to give you guys two comments here, and then we are going to caucus.

MR. NOWALSKY: I like how you just rephased this, Madam Chair, because we don't actually have a baseline adjustment approach that Maryland has developed yet to even thing about putting in here. As I view this, Maryland wants to go off and do some work. They are going to give that work to the TC and/or PDT to look at, at some point in time prior to May, assuming that they can get their constituents at home to agree to the work that they do. Maryland is going to do work. If their constituents agree to it, they would like the PDT and/or TC to take a look at it, and then if it passes muster, we would put this into the Addendum in May. That is what I'm really envisioning here. I really see the element of making the decision whether or not to include this now, as somewhat premature for us the Board.

I understand the situation however, that Maryland is in, is that they don't want to go off and do this work if there is no chance of this being included in the document anyway. There is a part of me that wants to make a motion right now to postpone this, let Maryland go off and do the work, if they so desire. They've heard the conversation around the table. They've heard the concerns that people have said. If they want to go off and do this work, okay.

At some point in time, all we would really need to do today is say, if Maryland does this work, we'll let the TC take a look at it at some point in time between now and May. That to me is really all we would sign off on here. I would make a motion we postpone this, we have the

conversation say, if Maryland develops this work they would show it to the TC.

The TC would bring it back to us in May, and then we would put this in the Addendum at that time. We sat down here, had other conversations about other addendums. We added an entire section to an Addendum today. We would be doing the same thing in this particular case. If you like that idea, I will make that motion. If that really isn't in the spirit of what we're trying to accomplish, then I'll just let you go forward with the vote.

CHAIR WARE: I think that might be a good approach, Adam, and I'll just say for the record this is saying, Maryland should go do your work. This is the Board acknowledging that the TC will review it and the Plan Development Team may start to work on it between now and May. If everyone is under that same understanding, then I will take your motion to postpone, Adam.

MR. NOWALSKY: I'm not seeing anyone telling me no, so **I would like to make the motion to postpone until the Spring Meeting.**

CHAIR WARE: You have a second by Eric Reid. We've moved to postpone the motion until the Spring Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Meeting. Motion by Adam Nowalsky, second by Eric Reid. I feel like we've had a very robust discussion. Has anyone not had an opportunity to comment on this topic? Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I don't think this motion changes if there is a single state involved here. I very much appreciate what Maryland is trying to do, all the comments around the table. Eric said if this is successful a lot of states want to do it. Going back to Mike Luisi's comment, if not now, when? The idea that other states would review their baseline is then years out.

You know it is going to be very tough to go home and say, well, we don't have the time to do this. I do think there is an awkward timing issue. This reminds me of the bluefish sector

separation vote that we went back home and said, sorry, this was a surprise. The lesson there was like, don't ever do that again. This is like, well, we allowed one state to try something and yes, it would be great for us. It's a great notion. But sometime down the road the rest of us will get to try this too. I do not want to be opposed to this, because I believe in it as a great conservation measure. In a way, I'm sorry, Mike, but to me the timing is wrong. Adam's motion to postpone still only leaves this on the table for Maryland, as I understand it.

CHAIR WARE: That's correct this is only on the table, as I see it right now, for Maryland. I would say Joe, one option given the motion how they are currently drafted is, if someone is not in favor of the concept overall, I think your option is to vote no on both of these motions. Then I would take that to mean the Board is not interested in Maryland convening their group and coming forward with a proposal.

I'm sure we've thoroughly confused everyone at this point, so we're going to do a two-minute caucus, and we'll assess where we're at after two minutes. We are currently focused on the motion to postpone. If that motion to postpone passes, my understanding is that Maryland will work with their constituents. They will bring a proposal to the PDT and the TC, and then at the May Board meeting the Board can decide whether to add this to the Addendum or not. I think we're ready to vote, so **all those in favor of the motion to postpone, please raise your hand.**

MS. FRANKE: In favor I have Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, PRFC, Maryland, Delaware, Maine and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Are there any votes in opposition?

MS. FRANKE: In opposition I have North Carolina, Virginia and D.C.

CHAIR WARE: Are there any abstentions?

MS. FRANKE: Abstentions, I have U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? The motion to postpone passes, 11 to 3 to 2. The underlying motion will come back to the Board in May, and at that point we will have a better sense of Maryland's work with their constituents. Okay, are there any other topics for the Addendum that folks want to bring forward? John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, and I have one that would be a commercial topic that I would like the PDT to look into. Hopefully it won't be as long as the last topic that came up. As we know, in the more than 10 years that we've been cutting back on the removals of striped bass, on the recreational side we've gone from directly quantifiable measures to much less and less quantifiable. But on the commercial side it's always been quota reduction, which is of course a very quantifiable measure.

I would like the PDT to take a look at a somewhat less quantifiable commercial measure, but one that I think will have an impact on reducing removals. That is to look at, currently we have point of sale requirement for tagging commercially caught striped bass. I would like the PDT to look at both Point of Harvest, which was recommended by the LEC before Addendum III to Amendment 6 was passed in 2012, and also Point of Landing, which full disclosure that is what Delaware has right now. As my fellow commissioner from Delaware pointed out that Point of Landing makes a safer opportunity to tag the fish, because it can be very difficult on rough days to tag the fish at sea, but it still, I think, provides more opportunity for Law Enforcement. My view of human nature, which seems to be confirmed all the time is that most people will follow the rules, but if you give people the opportunity to cheat, the bigger the

opportunity to cheat is then more cheating occurs.

I mean I think we've just seen a real-life example of this over the past few years, as many states have reduced penalties for shoplifting and enforcement of shoplifting. Now it seems like even in a place like Dover you've got half the toiletries are locked up in the store and you've got to get somebody to come open it up. Again, I'm not trying to impugn anybody here, but I'm just saying that I think that the more we can get a reduction in the number of commercial removals by looking at the timing of tagging the commercial catch.

The other benefit of this, I think, one of the things that comes up is we hear so many of the recreational anglers that are so opposed to the commercial fishery is they think that the quotas are always being exceeded, and we have better accountability of what is actually being removed by the commercial fishery, which I think would improve the confidence of recreational anglers, that the commercial fishery is indeed catching just its quota. I would like them to, as I said, take a look at those two options before this next Addendum.

CHAIR WARE: Given the time, I'll just ask, is there anyone that cannot live without or is strongly opposed to considering that in the Addendum? Okay, I think you're all set, John. Any other measures to consider in this Addendum? Jay.

DR. McNAMEE: It's not new, but revisiting. I'm sorry, something happened. This is a revisit. I was feeling guilty, you know we kept the mode separation stuff in there, like I was an opponent of them then gave you no guidance. I have been kind of struggling with that. The discussion with Maryland made me think, well, maybe there is actually some time here.

I guess what I'm suggesting is, I wonder if there is an opportunity to do some scoping with party and charter operators to get some feedback on

measures that are relevant and meaningful for them, to kind of constrain the universe a bit for you guys. If it's not possible, I understand, but given that last discussion I thought maybe it was in play.

CHAIR WARE: What I'm going to recommend is, I'm going to empower the states to do that. If states want to talk with their party/charter industries and come back to the May Board Meeting with information or provide that to the Plan Development Team through e-mail, that would be great. But I think that is the best way to handle that.

MS. FRANKE: From a staff perspective I would say, if you could bring that back to the PDT as soon as possible, I would think by early March would be, I know that is not a lot of time, but if you're looking for the PDT to develop options with that in mind, I think the PDT needs to start as soon as possible. Maybe I'll send a follow-up e-mail to think a little bit more about timing, but if you're hoping to scope then also have the PDT develop options for May, the PDT needs to know soon for how to structure the analysis.

CHAIR WARE: Nichola, I saw your hand for other measures.

MS. MESERVE: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to return to the topic of whether or not the PDT was going to be looking at possession limit changes. As the initiating motion stands, they are not included in there, so I would implore the Board Chair to require there be a motion to add possession limit considerations. There needs to be a motion to include them, otherwise the PDT will not be considering possession limit changes.

CHAIR WARE: I'm hearing no possession limit changes as a perspective on the Board member, is there anyone that cannot live with that or is strongly opposed? Adam Nowalsky, you are strongly opposed to Mike Luisi, so I would recommend you guys craft a motion to include that in the Addendum. Sorry, go ahead, Adam.

MR. NOWALSKY: **Move to include possession change options in the Addendum.**

CHAIR WARE: We will have staff craft something up and then we'll get a second. Okay, so we have a motion to include possession limit options in Draft Addendum III by Adam Nowalsky. Is there a second to that motion? Emerson Hasbrouck, thank you. Discussion on the motion. Excuse me, let me go to Adam first and then Emerson as the seconder.

MR. NOWALSKY: There is a handful of things that we've already discussed today, such as mode split, that are not explicit in that motion. When I go back to December and the Board motion that was passed had a couple of components of recreational measures changes, but not the possession element at the time, the discussion around the table was about, let's get something here down to guide what we're going to do, with the expectation that we would have this very meeting that we're having here today, to direct the PDT what to include.

We've now talked about adding some things, giving the PDT direction to analyze things today that were not explicit in that original motion. I would hope that possession limits, particularly in mode-split conversation that we've agreed to pass, we would not remove that simply because that language wasn't there. That is my reason for making this motion at this time.

CHAIR WARE: I'll go the seconder. Emerson, anything to add?

MR. HASBROUCK: Thank you, I don't have anything additional to add.

CHAIR WARE: All right, discussion by the Board. I think I saw Nichola and then Chris Batsavage.

MS. MESERVE: I think Adam may have addressed my question. I was wondering if his motion was specific to possession limit changes for the for-hire fleet in a mode-split option.

MR. NOWALSKY: I would advocate for giving the PDT options, so I'm somewhat hesitant to add that specific language to this. However, I would offer that as a starting point for the PDT, to look at mode-split with the for-hire, as a first place to use possession limits.

If there was something that they came across in doing their work, whereby they said oh, look, possession limits somewhere else would be a good option to give the Board. I wouldn't want to restrict them from having that flexibility now, but I would agree that the specific request would be to start with mode split at the for-hire as a place to utilize possession limits.

CHAIR WARE: Follow up, Nichola?

MS. MESERVE: Thank you for the clarification, Adam. I'm going to oppose the motion. I'm under the impression that we're looking at an Addendum to potentially restrict and reduce and conserve striped bass, not to liberalize possession limits right now. We're not going to half a fish, so this is looking at a two-fish limit or more.

I think we're either just, this is opening up Pandora's box, then the sea of options that the PDT might have to consider more so than anything else. I just think it is bad guidance to give the PDT right now, if we have any hope of getting something this year. I don't know how this fits in with what the goal of this Addendum is.

CHAIR WARE: Chris Batsavage.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Nichola basically said what I was going to say. We've really shifted toward balancing socioeconomic impacts, and pretty far away from striped bass stock rebuilding at this point of the Addendum. Oh yes, we're going to try to finish it all up by October at the latest. We're really setting ourselves up to fail.

CHAIR WARE: Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: Just a clarification on what my intent in supporting this is about. Mode splits doesn't mean liberalizing to me, and I think the Board was really clear about mode splits not meaning liberalizing at the meeting we had a year ago, when we decided to remove mode splits from the discussion.

I made a motion at that meeting that was more conservative, the effort was more conservative than what the Addendum was suggesting we do, and it was opposed. The intent here, I would like to be able to see how much tradeoff there would be. Say you have a three-month harvest season. But the charter boats have two fish instead of one fish.

Well, maybe that season now isn't three months anymore, it's a month and a half, to account for the difference. In order to explore what that means to the people that we're managing these resources for, we need to understand what those tradeoffs look like. There is no intent in my mind that we would be looking to liberalize our efforts.

It's about finding some balance between what gets people fishing and what keep people at home watching TV, so that we can continue to rebuild the stock as we are dedicated to do, but provide some additional flexibility and opportunity throughout the seasons that we have in the near future.

CHAIR WARE: Steve Train, you have your hand up online.

MR. STEPHEN R. TRAIN: I have a question for Adam. Mike may have answered that if Adam feels the same way. I would like to support this, because I think it may get the boats off the water soon, and less fish thrown back will be a lower mortality. Adam, do you see that as the end results of this?

CHAIR WARE: Adam, if you would like to respond, you can.

MR. NOWALSKY: I can't say with any certainty that a change in possession limit is going to get people off the water any sooner or later, but I can say with 100 percent certainty that I agree with what Mike just said, that this motion was not intended for any sense of liberalization, it was intended that we're talking about developing options with seasonal closures, potentially no targeting as well. Those are tradeoffs, that is the conversation, and just leaving the box open for the PDT to develop options within that tradeoff paradigm for any reductions that are needed.

CHAIR WARE: I'm not seeing any other hands, so we're going to do a one-minute caucus, and then we'll vote. Okay, I think we are done caucusing, so we're going to call the question on whether to include possession limit options in Draft Addendum III. **All those in favor, please raise your hand.**

MS. FRANKE: In favor I have Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, D.C. PRFC, Maryland and Delaware.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. FRANKE: Opposed I have Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, Maine and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. FRANKE: Abstentions, I have NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? No null votes. The motion fails 7 to 7 with 2 abstentions. Adam, do you have other measures to bring forward?

MR. NOWALSKY: If I understood the conversation and opposition, if you would allow it, Madam Chair, I would be inclined to make a **motion to include possession limit options for for-hire mode split options.**

CHAIR WARE: Okay. I am going to deem that to be significantly different or significantly enough different from the previous motion that we will have that motion up on the screen shortly. We have a second from Eric Reid. Adam, I will go to you for your rationale, then the seconder. We talked a lot about this, so if there are any critical comments, and then we're going to do a 30 second caucus. Then we will vote.

MR. NOWALSKY: All my previous comments still apply here. However, I would offer again that given the conversation, the concerns I heard about the previous motion, I understand from a conservation point we're not likely going back to two fish or three, or any more than that for the entirety of the recreational sector. But again, we're talking about tradeoffs within the for-hire sector, giving up seasons. This is a reasonable conversation to have, especially in light of the equity conversation we had earlier, what does equity really mean to different user groups?

CHAIR WARE: We have a motion to include possession limit options for for-hire mode split in Draft Addendum III. Anyone who has not had a chance to speak on this topic yet? Okay, we're going to do a 30 second caucus really quick. Okay, 30 seconds is up. We're going to call the question. **All those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand.**

MS. FRANKE: In favor I have Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, D.C. PRFC, Maryland and Delaware.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. FRANKE: Opposed I have Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, Maine and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. FRANKE: Abstentions I have U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? No null votes, so I believe it's the same count, 7, 7, 2 abstentions, so the motion fails. Okay, any other measures? John Clark, you have another measure?

MR. CLARK: Yes, I do, Madam Chair, it's another commercial measure. Hopefully the Board has been so softened up by now that it can go pretty quickly. I would just like the PDT to take a look at, well, this is going to be a big one here, quota reallocation of the commercial quota, but restricted to, right now we have 6 states that actually are harvesting striped bass commercially of the coastal quota.

I just want them to be considering, this would not be any increase, just if you take all the 2024 commercial quotas together it is about 1.75 million pounds. There would be no increase there. But once again, we're working on quotas that were set in the 1970s, back when I still had hair. A long, long time ago.

But I don't see there is really any possibility of us coming up with new methodology for estimating what would be a fair distribution of the commercial quota coastal quota any more, because I don't see it ever really opening up to the point where we have kind of the free for all we had back in the seventies, which is what this is based on.

I am not talking about anything radical right now. Maybe we could look at some options. For example, I see that out of the current quota 2024, two states have about over 70 percent of the quota, and some of the other states would like a little more. I think maybe we could look at something as simple as just putting a minimal percentage of the coastal quota for the states. I mean I know Craig could speak to this better than I could. But Delaware, all our fisheries are pretty small scale.

We still have watermen communities that, you know this has been going on for generations, right Craig, the gillnetting? You know we would

like to see that continue, and there has always been a market for it. The commercial fishermen in Delaware are supplying locally, as well as the region. We're getting to the point where it is diminishing returns.

Because every time we come back, and that is why I made the other suggestion for a commercial topic is just because no matter what we come up with for recreational it's always like, well, and then we'll just cut the commercial quota another 10 percent. You know we're getting to the point of no return for our commercial fisheries. Not seeing this increase anytime soon, I just think it's time we could look at some commonsense ways to reallocate.

CHAIR WARE: I'll just say as Chair; I have some concerns about adding commercial reallocation to an Addendum where we have a motion that says we are taking final action by the October meeting. That is my personal opinion. But I would just speak that for the Board for your consideration. We have an idea to add commercial reallocation to the Addendum. Is there anyone that is strongly opposed or in opposition? Nichola, okay, so we will need a motion, John, to add commercial reallocation to the Amendment.

MR. CLARK: Okay, I can make it very simple. Are we ready? I just say, **move to ask the PDT to investigate reallocation of the commercial quota between the 6 states that are harvesting the coastal stock commercially.** It would be no increase in the amount harvested, just reallocate what has actually been allocated through the 2024 quotas.

CHAIR WARE: Is there a second to that motion? Not seeing a hand, but I'm just going to have staff check the webinar. Eric Reid is going to second that motion. I'm going to go, John, do you have any additional rationale to provide for this motion? I'm going to go to the seconder first, then I'll come back to Craig, if that is okay. I'm going to pause, actually, just to get the

motion on the board really quick. John, can I have you read that motion? Read it into the record, and make sure it matches what you're looking for.

MR. CLARK: Certainly. Move to ask the Plan Development Team to investigate reallocation of the commercial quota among the 6 states that currently harvest striped bass from the coastal stock. There would be no increase from the total 2024 quota of those 6 states combined.

CHAIR WARE: I'll go to the seconder, Eric Reid for a rationale.

MR. REID: We've been having this discussion for a very long time, and I've supported it every opportunity, and I'm not going to fail that today. But I can't even imagine this will pass in any way, shape or form, to be perfectly honest with you.

CHAIR WARE: Craig, I will now go to you, thanks for your patience.

MR. CRAIG D. PUGH: As the request was for improvement or socioeconomic status, we can find results where this adds up to an 80 percent disparity on some levels. We do not see much equity balance; it's more I eventually see just unfair treatment over a long period of time. It's now entered into two generations of this disparity, which we know we can catch the fish.

We would like to have the opportunity to do so before that escapes us. I don't quite understand why this disparity seems to be so long lasting, other than I understand states not wanting to give up their quota. But I hear all of this talk today about equity and balance and socioeconomics. I've lived that within this disparity.

It's embarrassing to know that we do have such a small allocation in our state, when we have these discussions through other states, as we market our fish. Now if I ask these questions

about that, of course that comes back to the Commission. What the Commission is willing to provide and what the Commission is willing to do to help those people in those desperate positions.

We do feel we're in a desperate position. We've extended several cuts over the years at multiple times. That is because our quota is so small that impacts us greatly. We're now down to about 1100 pounds annually per fisherman in the state. It takes ordinarily two, three days to catch that. That is not really an income, that is not really a job, that is a hobby. It's a shame. Some practical talk here about this, to level off this playing field, would be appreciated. If you all would consider and extend that to us, we would appreciate it, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Craig. I have Ray and then Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. KANE: Yes, I have a question about the motion. It refers to only coastal stock. Isn't there a commercial fishery in Chesapeake Bay?

CHAIR WARE: Yes, I'll let John clarify here.

MR. CLARK: Yes, there is, Ray, but these are the states that all their quota is coming out of the coastal stock. I mean two of the states have both, but this only refers to, like for Maryland and Virginia, they both have small coastal quotas also. This is just for the coastal quota, not the Chesapeake.

MS. FRANKE: Just one more clarification. This is only referring to ocean quota, and the 6 states are referring to who currently harvest striped bass commercially in the ocean that is Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, correct? You're not including North Carolina.

CHAIR WARE: Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. HASBROUCK: I had my hand up because I was prepared to amend this motion, but I've

reconsidered that, so I'll pass for the moment. Thank you.

CHAIR WARE: John, just to clarify. Can I ask what your vision is for New Jersey? I understand they don't have a commercial fishery but they do use that quota.

MR. CLARK: Well, I wanted to leave Connecticut and New Jersey, who both turned their commercial quota into bonus fish recreationally. This is not affecting the total amount of quota out there, I wanted to leave New Jersey and Connecticut alone, they just keep what they've got for their bonus program. This is only for the states that are commercially harvesting. You take the total amount that they are harvesting, and we just reallocate it a bit among the states that are in that category.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, anyone who is burning to comment on this? Yes, Roy Miller. Then I don't see any other hands, and Pat Geer and then we will caucus.

MR. MILLER: A quick clarification, Madam Chair. Does this include North Carolina's commercial quota or not?

MR. CLARK: No.

MR. MILLER: That quota wouldn't be available for reallocation, am I correct?

CHAIR WARE: That is my understanding of the motion.

MR. CLARK: Just a little further explanation. I knew that was a very sensitive issue, I didn't want to bring that up. I mean North Carolina is that big chunk of quota that is not being used. We talked about that with the previous Addendum here, where there was a possibility of transferring that, but that is something that won't happen anytime in the near future. This is just dealing with what we're actually harvesting commercially now, and so there wouldn't be any of those other issues involved.

CHAIR WARE: Pat Geer.

MR. GEER: John, I know we talked about this before. How many pounds would you need to be whole?

MR. CLARK: Oh, a million, two million. No, one of the things I thought about here was like I said, just a minimum level, Pat, which would if for example you divided it up with a minimum amount a state could get, would be 10 percent of that entire amount. That would bring us back somewhat closer to where we were under Amendment 6, where we were at 193,000 pounds there. If 10 percent was the minimum, we would be at about 175,000 pounds. It's not a lot more but it would help.

CHAIR WARE: Seeing no other hands we're going to caucus for 30 seconds. That was 30 seconds, so I'm not seeing anyone waving their hand that they need more time, so we are going to call the question. This is asking if we should add commercial quota reallocation to this Addendum. **All those in favor, please raise your hand.**

MS. FRANKE: In favor I have Rhode Island and Delaware.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. FRANKE: Opposed I have Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, D.C., PRFC, Maryland, Maine and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. FRANKE: Abstentions I have NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? Not seeing any null votes. The motion fails 2 to 12 with 2 abstentions. At this point I'm not even going to ask if there are other measures. I think that we have thoroughly discussed this, and we're going

to move on. The Plan Development Team has a lot of work ahead of them.

I'm going to thank them ahead of time for all of their efforts between now and May, and we will come back to this at the May Board Meeting. We're going to move on to our next agenda item, which is Review and Populate the Advisory Panel. Emilie is going to do that.

REVIEW AND POPULATE THE ADVISORY PANEL

MS. FRANKE: For your consideration in supplemental materials was a nomination from Maine for Captain Peter Fallon to join the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

CHAIR WARE: We're looking for a motion. Representative Hepler.

REPRESENTATIVE ALLISON HEPLER: That's my queue. I would like to nominate Captain Peter Fallon to the Advisory Panel.

CHAIR WARE: Could I ask you to read the motion into the record?

REPRESENTATIVE HEPLER: Oh, yes, **move to approve Peter Fallon of Maine to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.**

CHAIR WARE: We got a **second from Eric Reid.** I just wanted to take a moment. Peter Fallon is replacing Dave Pecci, who is retiring. I went back and looked. Dave joined the AP in 2002, he has been on this AP for 22 years. I really want to thank Dave on behalf of Maine for his over two decades of service on this Advisory Panel, that is very commendable.

We wish you the best in retirement, Dave. Is there any discussion on this motion? **Any opposition to the motion? Okay, the motion is approved by unanimous consent,** thank you. We are now on to Other Business. Is there any Other Business before the Board? Dennis Abbot.

MR. ABBOTT: Reminding me, after you congratulated the leaving member. In the last month or so, I think it was in December that a longtime Maine fisherman and member of the Maine Advisory Committee on Shrimp, a gentleman named Marshall Alexander passed away after three years with dementia and a few other things. He was a wonderful man; he was a pleasure to deal with. He had a few little sayings, like every time you asked him something he would say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, and whatever. But I will miss Marshall Alexander and I just wanted to make that mention.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR WARE: Thank you, Dennis for that remembrance. Any other, Other Business? Okay, we are adjourned, thank you everyone for your patience.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m. on Tuesday, February 4, 2025)



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • www.asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

FROM: Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator

DATE: April 22, 2025

SUBJECT: Review the Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment

The Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) is repopulated prior to each benchmark stock assessment. ASMFC Staff solicited nominations for SAS members from the Administrative Commissioners on the Atlantic Striped Bass Board and the Assessment Science Committee. The following state and federal scientists have been nominated for Board approval:

- Mike Celestino, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- Margaret Conroy, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Brooke Lowman, Virginia Marine Resources Commission
- Gary Nelson, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
- Alexei Sharov, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- John Sweka, US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tyler Grabowski, Technical Committee Chair, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Katie Drew, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

The Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee has recommended that the Board consider the following Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Assessment, scheduled to be peer reviewed through the Northeast Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) Research Track Assessment Process in March 2027.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For the 2027 ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment

Draft for Board Approval

1. Identify relevant ecosystem influences on the stock. Characterize the uncertainty in the relevant sources of data and their link to stock dynamics. Consider findings, as appropriate, in addressing other TORs. Report how the findings were considered under impacted TORs.
2. Investigate all available fisheries independent and dependent data sets, including life history, indices of abundance, and tagging data. Describe the spatial and temporal distribution of the data. Characterize the uncertainty in the data. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the data sources and justify inclusion or elimination of datasets.
3. Estimate commercial and recreational landings and discards. Characterize the uncertainty in the data and spatial distribution of the fisheries. Review new MRIP estimates of catch, effort and the calibration method if available.
4. Use an age-based model to estimate annual fishing mortality, recruitment, total abundance and stock biomass (total and spawning stock) for the time series and estimate their uncertainty. Provide model diagnostics, retrospective analysis of the model results and historical retrospective. Provide estimates of exploitation by stock component and sex, where possible, and for total stock complex. If multiple models have been considered, compare results and performance and justify choice of preferred model.
5. Use tagging data to estimate mortality and abundance, and provide suggestions for further development.
6. Update or redefine biological reference points (BRPs; point estimates or proxies for B_{MSY} , SSB_{MSY} , F_{MSY} , MSY). Define stock status based on BRPs by stock component where possible.
7. Explore new methods to predict future catch or F . Provide annual projections of catch and biomass under these scenarios. Projections should estimate and report annual probabilities of exceeding threshold BRPs for F and probabilities of falling below threshold BRPs for biomass.
8. If a minority report has been filed, explain majority reasoning against adopting approach suggested in that report. The minority report should explain reasoning against adopting approach suggested by the majority.
9. Review and evaluate the status of the Technical Committee research recommendations listed in the most recent SARC report. Identify new research recommendations. Recommend timing and frequency of future assessment updates and benchmark assessments.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfmc.org

Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Meeting Summary

Webinars

March 20, March 25, and March 28, 2025

TC-SAS Members in Attendance: Tyler Grabowski (TC Chair, PA), Mike Celestino (SAS Chair, NJ), Michael Brown (ME), Gary Nelson (MA), Nicole Lengyel Costa (RI), Kurt Gottschall (CT), Caitlin Craig (NY), Brendan Harrison (NJ), Margaret Conroy (DE), Alexei Sharov (MD), Luke Lyon (DC), Ingrid Braun-Ricks (PRFC), Shakira Goffe (VA), Brooke Lowman (VA), Jeremy McCargo (NC), Charlton Godwin (NC), John Sweka (USFWS)

ASMFC Staff in Attendance: Katie Drew, Emilie Franke, Samara Nehemiah, Toni Kerns

Others in Attendance: Gerard Addonizio, Bayleigh Albert, Max Appelman, Mike Armstrong, Rick Bellavance, Alan Bianchi, Sean Briggs, David Borden, Robert T. Brown, Jack Buchanan, Allison Colden, Russell Dize, Eric Durell, Glen Fernandes, Corrin Flora, Brandon Foor, Tony Friedrich, Angela Giuliano, Charles Green, Brian Hardman, Jesse Hornstein, Bob Humphrey, Nick Jones, Ray Kane, Carrie Kennedy, Elise Koob, Mike Luisi, Dan McKiernan, Nichola Meserve, Michael Pirri, Will Poston, Jason Seman, David Sikorski, Jeff Swayze, Kristen Thiebault, Beth Versak, Megan Ware, Mike Waive, Michael Woods, Jordan Zimmerman, Erik Zlokovitz

The Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) met via webinar on March 20, March 25, and March 28, 2025 to discuss the following items:

- Draft Addendum III Projections and 2026 Reduction
- Draft Addendum III Size and Season Closure Analysis
- Maryland Recreational Season Baseline Methods
- Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Massachusetts Conservation Equivalency Proposal for the Commercial Fishery

Draft Addendum III Projections and 2026 Reduction

Per the Board's motion from December 2024, Draft Addendum III will consider potential reductions for 2026 based on projections incorporating preliminary estimates of 2024 removals. The Board requested projections and associated reductions for both a 50% and 60% probability of rebuilding stock by 2029. The TC used the model from the 2024 Stock Assessment Update for these projections. For fishing mortality (F) input for 2024-2029, the TC calculated a preliminary estimate of F₂₀₂₄ and discussed what assumptions should be used for F₂₀₂₅ and F₂₀₂₆₋₂₀₂₉.

To estimate preliminary 2024 removals and F2024, the TC used preliminary 2024 MRIP estimates (released in February 2025) and assumed an estimated 7% decrease in commercial removals relative to 2023 due to the Addendum II quota reduction of 7%. The resulting preliminary estimate of recreational removals based on full-year 2024 data is within the range of previously projected estimates of 2024 recreational removals based on partial-year data (Figure 1).

In 2025, with no management change from 2024, F is predicted to increase as the above-average 2018 year-class enters the current ocean slot limit. The TC agreed the best assumption to use for the F2025 increase is +17% relative to 2024 based on the observed +17% increase from 2021 to 2023 when part of the 2015 year-class was still in the newly reduced ocean slot limit. The TC notes the magnitude of increase may be overestimated since the 2018 year-class is not as strong as the 2015 year-class was. The TC did discuss potentially modifying the F2025 estimate by changing or resampling the F2025 distribution to sample more heavily from the lower end of the distribution, but the TC ultimately determined this will likely not have much impact on the results and that 17% is the best assumption based on observed history. The TC continues to emphasize the uncertainty of predicting future fishing mortality.

For F2026-2029, five scenarios with different assumptions for F2026-2029 were run:

1. F2026-2029 = F_rebuild 50% (constant F for 2026-2029 necessary for SSB to be at or above the rebuilding target in 2029 with a 50% probability)
2. F2026-2029 = F_rebuild 60% (constant F for 2026-2029 necessary for SSB to be at or above the rebuilding target in 2029 with a 60% probability)
3. F2026-2029 = F2024 (normal distribution)
4. F2026-2029 = F2024 (skewed distribution)
5. F2026-2029 = Variable_F (draw from 2021-2024 Fs)

Per TC discussion in January 2025, the “variable F” scenario was included for exploration for F2026-2029. This scenario is based on TC concerns that a constant F scenario for 2026-2029 was unrealistic and a scenario with more variability in F would be more likely. For the variable F scenario, instead of drawing F from a distribution centered around F_2024 or F_rebuild (constant F scenarios), F in each year was drawn from recently observed F point estimates (F2021-2024) as a starting point for TC discussion. The TC noted that including 2021-2023 in the variable F scenario is not representative of conditions in 2026-2029. First, the ocean slot limit was seven inches in 2021-2023 vs. the current three-inch slot. Second, the strong 2015 year-class available to the ocean fishery in 2021-2023 was stronger than the 2018 year-class. Third, the resulting median F for the 2021-2024 variable F scenario would be an increase relative to 2025. This is counter to the TC’s predicted decrease in F from 2025 to 2026 as the 2018 year-class starts to grow out of the ocean slot limit. For these reasons, the TC decided the variable F scenario should not move forward for Draft Addendum III projections.

The TC agreed that assuming $F_{2026-2029}=F_{2024}$ is a reasonable assumption under the same narrow slot limit and as an above-average year-class grows out of the slot. However, TC decided to explore a modified projection by changing the distribution of F_{2024} that the projection is drawing from. The TC agreed to explore a skewed distribution for the F_{2024} scenario with a wider distribution to encompass a wider range of F values and to skew toward higher F values in the distribution (i.e., a longer “tail” on the higher end increasing the probability of a higher F value) that would still be centered on the F_{2024} value (Figure 2). This results in wider confidence intervals skewed to encompass more higher F values (Figure 3), which results in a slightly lower probability of rebuilding and slightly higher required percent reduction (Table 1).

Table 1. Probability of rebuilding by 2029 under different F scenarios and the reduction in 2026 removals needed to achieve a 50% or 60% probability of rebuilding. The projection selected by the TC-SAS for Draft Addendum III reduction is shaded in green.

Scenario	Prob. of Rebuild by 2029	2026 Removals	2026 Reduction in Removals to achieve $F_{\text{rebuild}} 50\%$	2026 Reduction in Removals to achieve $F_{\text{rebuild}} 60\%$
$F_{2026-2029} = F_{\text{rebuild}} 50\% = 0.122$	50%	3.50 million fish	0%	-6%
$F_{2026-2029} = F_{\text{rebuild}} 60\% = 0.114$	60%	3.29 million fish	NA	0%
$F_{2026-2029} = F_{2024} = 0.123$ (normal distribution)	48.7%	3.54 million fish	-1%	-7%
$F_{2026-2029} = F_{2024} = 0.123$ (skewed distribution)	43.6%	3.66 million fish	-4%	-10%

The TC-SAS discussed which projection should be used for Draft Addendum III, the normal or skewed distribution. First, the TC-SAS notes the projection results are very similar. While the skewed distribution does encompass more of the higher F values, the TC-SAS noted some concern that the skewed distribution might be too wide, encompassing F values even above the F threshold. The TC-SAS reiterated rationale for moving forward with the F_{2024} assumption in the first place, and the credible prediction that F is likely to be similar to F_{2024} levels. **So, the TC-SAS agreed the F_{2024} normal distribution is the most appropriate to move forward for Draft Addendum III.**

The TC-SAS notes both F_{2024} scenarios result in reductions of 10% or less, and the TC-SAS re-emphasizes previous guidance on small percent reductions. The outcome of management

changes designed to achieve small changes (i.e., reductions or liberalizations of less than 10%) would be difficult to measure given the uncertainty in the MRIP estimates. Total removals are not known to within 10%, so a reduction of less than 10% would not be statistically distinguishable from no reduction at all (i.e., status quo measures). In addition, the effectiveness of measures estimated to achieve a small percent reduction on paper for the recreational fishery would be overwhelmed by uncertainty in the reduction calculations themselves, including uncertainty around fish availability, effort, and angler behavior.

The TC-SAS also continues to highlight several major sources of uncertainty in the projections including the magnitude of the increase in F in 2025 that is expected to occur, and the F rate that the population will experience from 2026-2029.

Draft Addendum III Size and Season Closure Analysis

The same methods previously used to calculate 2025 management options (see [December 2024 TC Report](#)) are being applied to develop Draft Addendum III 2026 management options with some updates, including pooling additional data years for season closure analysis, exploring mode split options, exploring seasonal closures split between two waves, and using different data years for ocean size limit analysis to reflect 2026 fish availability.

The Plan Development Team (PDT) asked for TC input on three specific questions regarding size and season analysis for Draft Addendum III:

- a. Which data year(s) should be used for ocean size limit analysis?
- b. How should an outlier MRIP estimate in seasonal closure analysis be addressed?
- c. Should the issue of weekday vs. weekend catch rates be further pursued?

Data for Ocean Size Limit Analysis

In previous January 2025 discussion, the TC identified a few possible data years to use for the 2026 ocean size limit analysis. In 2026, the above-average 2018 year-class will be age-8 but is preceded/followed by below-average year-classes. The TC previously identified the 2004 year-class, 2011 year-class, and 2014 year-class as possible proxies since they were above-average year-classes mostly followed by below-average year-classes and were a similar level of year-class strength as the 2018 year-class. These potential proxy year-classes would be age-8 in 2012, 2019, and 2022, respectively. The challenge with all of these potential proxy years is avoiding the impact of other strong year-classes in the length frequency data (e.g., 2015s following the 2014s).

The TC asked whether the PDT had any input on the proxy years (Figure 4). Since the Board would like to explore size limits above 35", the PDT needs proxy year data that allow such analysis. This eliminates the 2022 length frequency data from consideration since the 28"-<35" slot limit was in place in 2022, which does not allow analysis of any size limits above 35". Given that, the TC focused discussion on the 2012 and 2019 proxy years.

The TC noted the benefit of using multiple years of data, but was concerned about pooling 2012 and 2019 data together given the very high catch in 2012 likely associated with the very strong 2003 year-class, which would overtake the 2019 data. Instead **the TC recommended averaging the reductions calculated individually from the 2012 data and 2019 data.**

The TC also noted the 2019 length frequency data includes a high estimate in the 19" size bin. The TC recommended the PDT further investigate whether the estimate is an outlier by considering whether the estimate is a result of a few heavily weighted intercepts (would indicate an outlier) and whether that size class appears to progress through the sizes in following years (would indicate they are 'real' fish). If the investigation indicates this estimate is most likely an outlier, the TC recommends the PDT address the outlier estimate with an appropriate method.

Outlier: Rhode Island 2021 Wave 2 Recreational Live Releases

The PDT identified an outlier MRIP estimate included in seasonal closure analysis data. The Rhode Island 2021 Wave 2 release estimate is very high (by an order of magnitude) compared to RI Wave 2 estimates from other years (Table 2). The 2021 estimate is 1.7 million live releases, while the other estimates over the past several years range from approximately 79,000 to 493,000 live releases.

Table 2. Rhode Island Wave 2 Released Alive Estimates from MRIP.

Year	RI Wave 2 Released Alive (B2) Number of Fish	PSE
2017	176,244	69.2
2018	166,784	61.4
2019	493,117	34.7
2020	247,945	33.8
2021	1,753,954	66.3
2022	196,509	56.8
2023	251,865	58.5
2024	79,530	45.7

This Wave 2 outlier estimate is included in the ocean seasonal closure analysis. RI estimates are pooled across years and pooled with other states to comprise regions, so the impact of this one outlier may be minimized. Or, the estimate could be dropped from the analysis, but the PDT is interested in whether there are other ways to address the outlier estimate.

Initial investigation during the webinar revealed neighboring states did not see a similar Wave 2 increase, the effort estimates did not increase to the same degree, and there are a few heavily-weighted intercepts with high releases. This indicates the estimate is likely an outlier, but **the TC recommends the PDT further investigate the MRIP intercepts and then take appropriate steps to address the RI outlier estimate if indicated.** Options could include removing the estimate from the analysis, removing the outlier intercepts, or replacing the estimate with an average or value from another year.

Weekends and Weekdays in Seasonal Closure Analysis

Seasonal closure analysis assumes a constant daily savings of harvest and/or releases. The TC has acknowledged that catch is not constant per day, especially between weekdays and weekends/holidays (i.e., weekends/holidays tend to have higher effort and catch). In January 2025, the TC requested investigation into MRIP data to understand the differences between type of day (Figure 5). MRIP categorizes Monday-Thursday as weekdays and Friday-Sunday + Federal Holidays as weekends. Generally, removals are higher per day on weekends vs. weekdays, and the pooled average removals per day used in seasonal closure analysis (i.e., summed across both types of days) is somewhere in the middle.

The TC-SAS recognizes the practical difficulties of incorporating weekends vs. weekdays in the analysis, and notes the seasonal closure analysis results may not change much if weekend vs. weekday is added, especially if closures are at least 14 days long (encompassing eight weekdays and six weekend days). However, it was noted the weekend catch rate is almost double the weekday catch rate in some waves, so incorporating the weekend vs. weekday analysis should at least be explored. **The TC-SAS agreed a case study example incorporating weekend vs. weekday would be informative to compare to the current analysis and determine how adding this weekend/weekday aspect would impact the results.**

Maryland Recreational Season Baseline Methods

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDDNR) is working with stakeholders to develop a proposal to change Maryland's baseline recreational season (i.e., shift the timing and/or type of closures throughout the year). In order to be equivalent to the current season, the new season baseline option cannot exceed 2024 removals. This proposal is separate from any potential reduction in Draft Addendum III, and any required seasonal closure in Draft Addendum III would be in addition to the new baseline season.

MDDNR was seeking TC input on the methods for quantifying changes to recreational closures throughout the year with two specific questions:

- Which proposed method should be used to estimate the increase in releases from opening a no-targeting closure to allow catch-and-release?
- Should the analysis incorporate varying release mortality rates by Wave? Or should the analysis apply the current standard 9% for the entire year?

On the release mortality rate, the TC-SAS agreed the current standard 9% release mortality rate should be applied. This would maintain consistency with all other striped bass analyses and

current assessment which use the 9% rate. Applying varying release mortality rates may be considered through the 2027 Benchmark Assessment, but until then all analyses should use the same rate of 9% for the entire year.

MDDNR presented two methods for estimating the increase in releases from opening a current no-targeting closure to allow catch-and-release. One method is based on 2015-2018 data from past Addendum VI analysis and the other method is based on 2024 release rates for March, which is currently a catch and release season. To estimate how releases would increase if April were opened to catch and release from the current no targeting closure, the TC-SAS agreed the March data approach should be used, but the data should be expanded to pool 2021-2024 data and the ratio of March to April releases should be calculated based on those four years of data. The same method should be applied to calculate increased releases in May if May 1-15 is opened to catch and release from the current no targeting closure. The TC-SAS emphasized the need to pool data across multiple years for this proposal, especially considering the data being used are sometimes below even the Wave level (e.g., by month).

One TC member noted concern about the different estimated changes in releases in Wave 6 for expanding the harvest season vs. shortening the harvest season. Two different ratios of harvest to releases are being applied when it seems like the same ratio should be applied to both scenarios.

The TC-SAS discussed concerns about high PSEs for this type of analysis at the Wave level (and sub-Wave) and discussed whether the Amendment 7 CE standards should apply (no PSEs over 40 and uncertainty buffer must be applied for PSEs between 30-40). Staff clarified this proposal would not be considered CE (see below). The TC-SAS broadened the discussion to note concerns about PSEs for all the options in Draft Addendum III (e.g., regional ocean options) and recommended the Draft Addendum and Maryland's season proposal include PSE estimates for the options being presented to the Board. The TC-SAS noted there is a tradeoff of implementing management measures on a state-, region-, Wave-, or mode- level with less precision and higher uncertainty around those management measures.

Regarding FMP process, there were questions about whether this Maryland option would be considered conservation equivalency (CE). If the Draft Addendum includes this option for Maryland to change their baseline, then it would not be CE because it would be written into the Addendum. It is a Board decision whether the Addendum should include this option.

Terms of Reference for the 2027 ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment

The TC-SAS developed the attached proposed terms of reference (TORs) for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment for consideration by the Striped Bass Management Board. The proposed TORs are largely based on the TORs from the 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment with some modifications and some newly added TORs, as summarized below.

TOR #1 is a new TOR to consider relevant ecosystem and climate influences on the stock, characterize uncertainty of the associated data sources, and link to stock dynamics. This TOR is

included in the Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SAW/SARC) generic TORs, and the TC-SAS agreed it should be added to the striped bass assessment.

TOR #2 on fisheries independent and dependent data sets was modified to explicitly address the spatial and temporal distribution of the data, characterizing the uncertainty, and justifying whether or not a dataset is used in the assessment. The SAW/SARC generic TORs include this level of specificity, and the TC-SAS agreed it would be helpful to add to this TOR.

TOR #4 on model development was modified to explicitly state that if multiple models are being considered, the model results and performance should be compared and rationale provided on the choice of preferred model. The TC-SAS noted the possibility of exploring multiple models and acknowledging that in the TOR. This TOR was also modified to explicitly note model diagnostics will be provided. The TC-SAS notes model diagnostics are always included, but it should be explicitly included in the TOR as it is in the SAW/SARC general TORs.

TOR #7 on projections was modified to include exploring new methods to predict future catch or fishing mortality. The TC-SAS noted the challenges and recent frequency of requests from the Board for short-term projections and analysis of new management measures. The TC-SAS noted there are new methods, such as model-based methods explored for other species (e.g., Recreational Demand Model and Recreational Fleet Dynamics Model), that could be explored for application to striped bass.

TOR #8 is a new TOR explaining procedure if a minority report is filed. Based on experience with other species, the TC-SAS agreed that while they do not expect a minority report to be filed, this TOR would be beneficial in the event that occurs.

Massachusetts Conservation Equivalency Proposal for the Commercial Fishery

Note: The CE proposal has since been withdrawn by Massachusetts.

Massachusetts submitted a conservation equivalency (CE) proposal to consider changing its commercial size limit in 2025 and adjust the commercial quota accordingly based on maintaining equivalent spawning potential analysis. Massachusetts' current commercial size limit is 35" minimum, and this proposal included a range of options to implement a commercial slot limit. TC input was needed to evaluate proposed methods for the associated quota adjustment. Massachusetts outlined two methods for adjusting the commercial quota: 1) adjusting the quota to account for changes to the minimum size only, or 2) adjust the quota to account for changes to both the minimum and maximum size.

Massachusetts' proposal noted that the current spawning potential analysis does not take into account the value of large females to the stock, which are currently harvested in the Massachusetts commercial fishery. Implementing a commercial slot limit would protect those larger females from harvest, and due to the unquantified value of those large females, Massachusetts proposed not adjusting the quota for adding a maximum size limit, and only

adjusting the quota for changes to the minimum size limit. Massachusetts' proposal also noted that during Addendum IV to Amendment 6 approved in 2014, the TC guidance at the time was that establishing a maximum size limit was more conservative and did not require a quota adjustment as long as they were also increasing their minimum size back to 28".

While the TC recognized the conservation principle of protecting large females, the TC noted the most current spawning potential analysis reviewed by the TC during development of Addendum II to Amendment 7 ([September 2023 TC Memo 23-85](#)) requires adjusting the quota for changes to both the minimum and maximum size to account for changes in the size of fish harvested. **Therefore, the TC determined that in order to achieve equivalency, Massachusetts would need to adjust their quota for changes to both the minimum and maximum size limits.**

The TC recommends future discussion on how to account for the higher contribution of large females in spawning potential analysis. The TC also recommends considering how to account for discard mortality in future spawning potential analysis, as the TC noted concern about higher discards when implementing a new maximum size limit.

There was also a question about high-grading and whether that is a particular concern with a new maximum size limit in place. It was noted that a small portion of trips actually reach the daily limit on number of fish in Massachusetts so high-grading is not a specific concern, and generally high-grading is not necessarily more prevalent when there is a maximum size in place.

The TC noted the importance of communicating why quota adjustments are implemented when commercial size limits are changed, and in particular, why quotas decrease when a maximum size limit is implemented. In the commercial fishery, when the minimum size decreases (e.g., change from 35" minimum to 32" minimum) and/or when a maximum size is implemented (e.g., change from 35" minimum to 35"-40" slot), the average size of harvested fish decreases. Without a quota adjustment, total removals in numbers of fish would likely increase resulting in more smaller fish being harvested. In addition, discards of oversized fish will increase. The spawning potential calculations account for this by calculating an adjusted quota to keep a state's commercial impact on the overall spawning potential of the stock the same under the new size limits (i.e., no additional spawning potential is lost from harvesting more, smaller fish). Any state that implements a lower minimum size limit or any maximum size limit must reduce their quota to maintain equivalency.

On the other hand, if a commercial fishery increases the minimum size (e.g., change from 28" minimum to 34" minimum), spawning potential calculations allow an increase in quota since the size of harvested fish will increase (i.e., fewer fish under the same quota amount). So, a state that increases their commercial minimum size limit would increase their quota to maintain equivalency. If the state chooses to increase the commercial minimum size limit without increasing the quota, that would be more conservative.

Figures

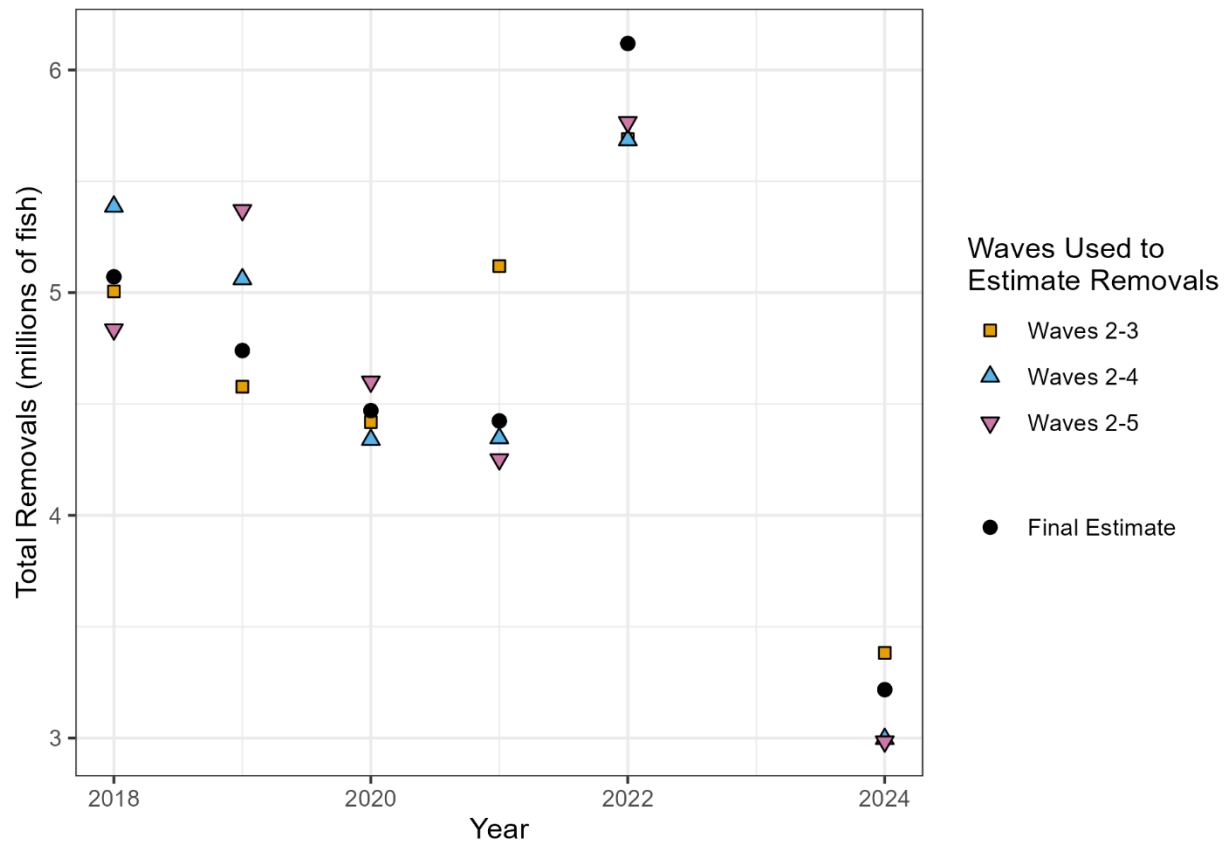


Figure 1. Comparison of estimates of MRIP removals from partial wave data compared to the final estimate using all waves of data. 2024 “Final Estimates” are preliminary but based on the full year of data.

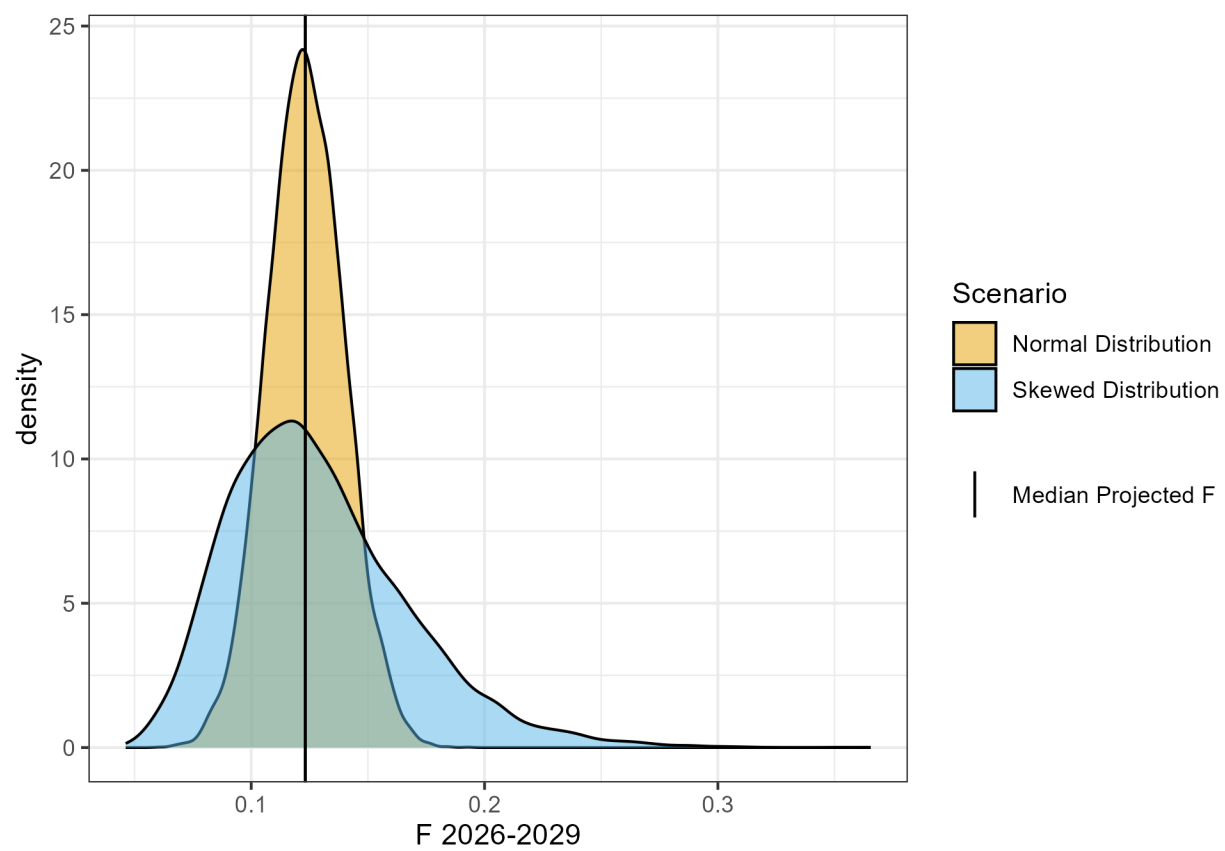


Figure 2. Distributions of F values explored for F2026-2029: F2024 normal distribution (yellow) and F2024 skewed distribution (blue).

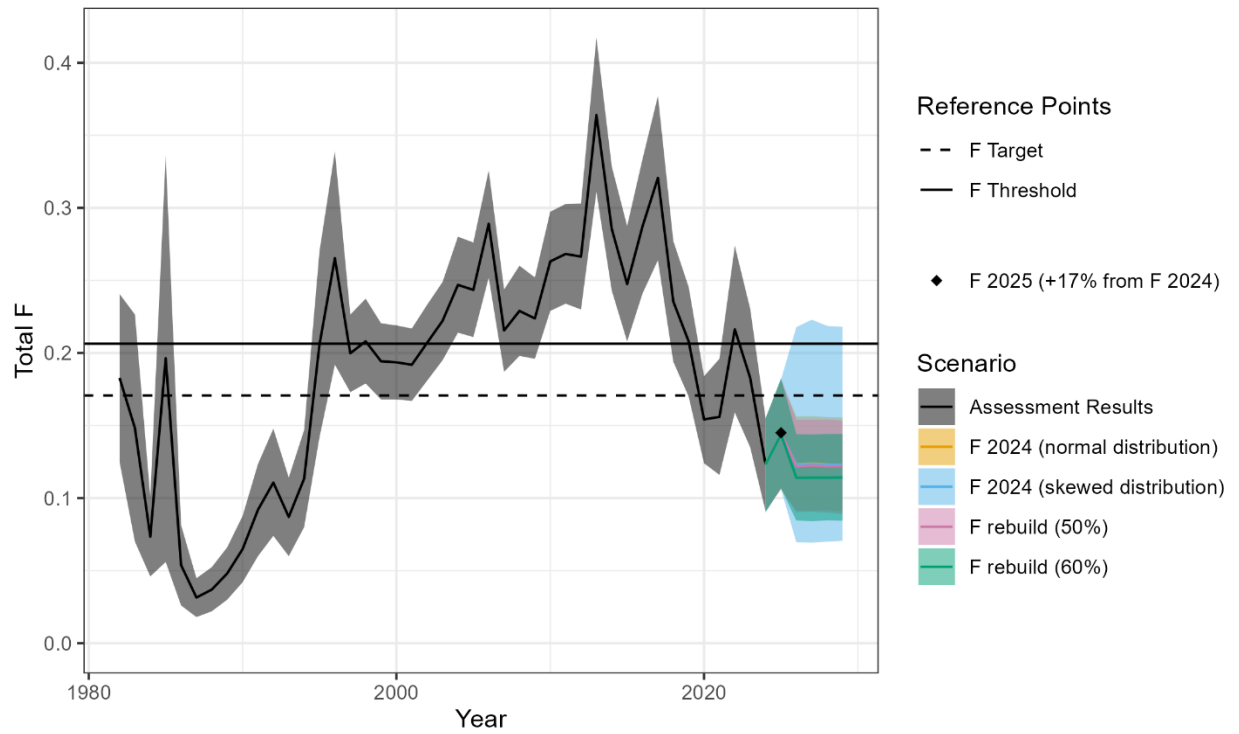


Figure 3. F trajectories used in the projection scenarios plotted with the time-series of F estimated by the assessment model. Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals.

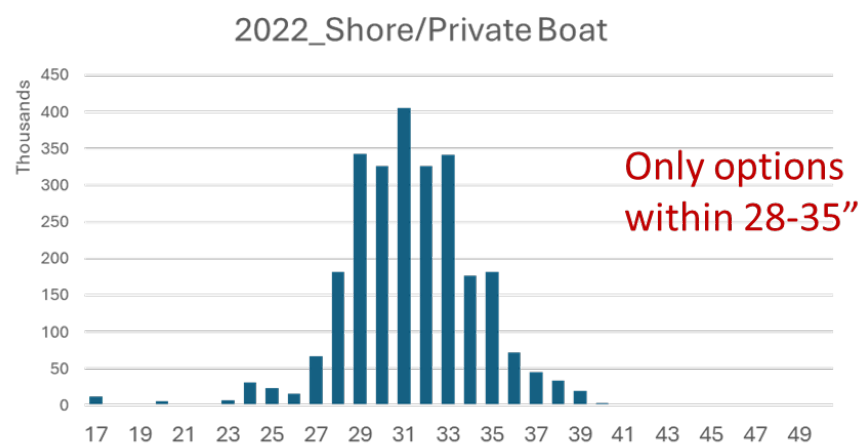
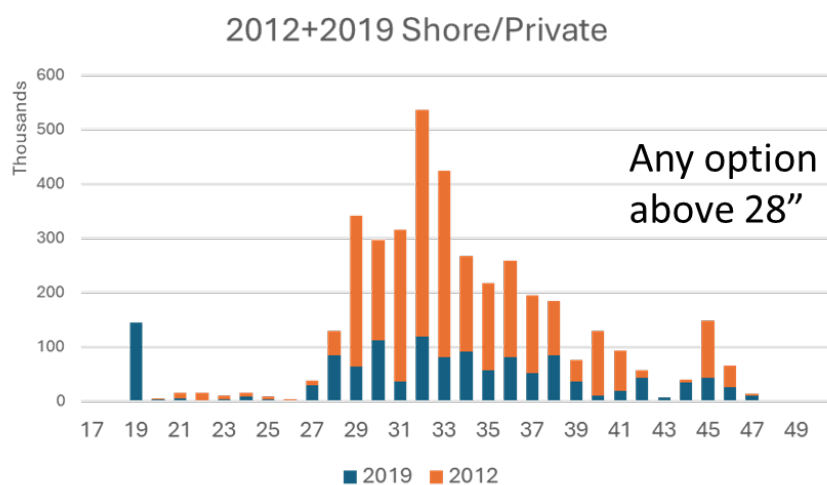
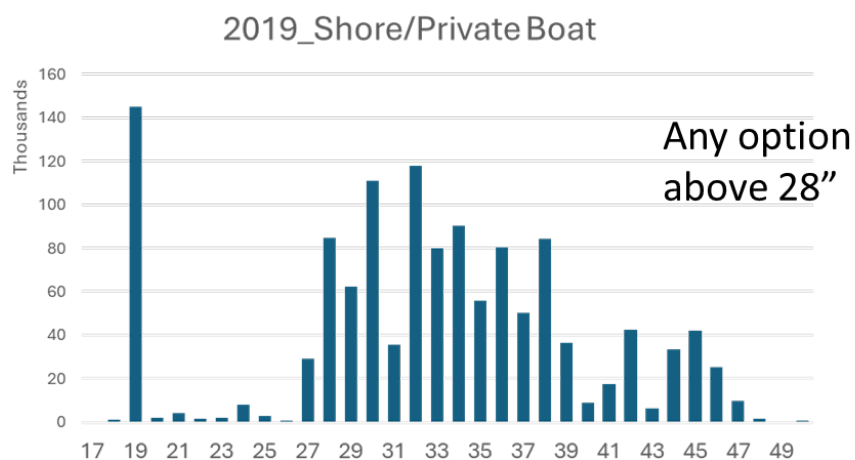
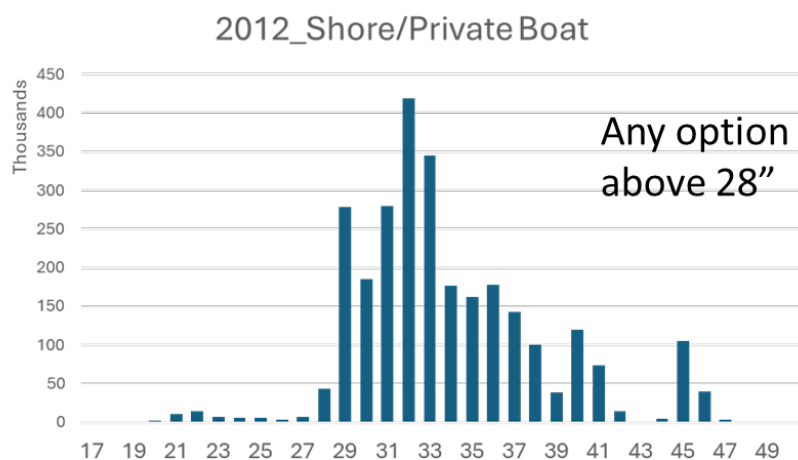


Figure 4. Length frequencies for 2026 proxy candidate years for Ocean fish availability with an above average age-8 year-class. Text indicates what type of size limit options could be explored for each proxy year.

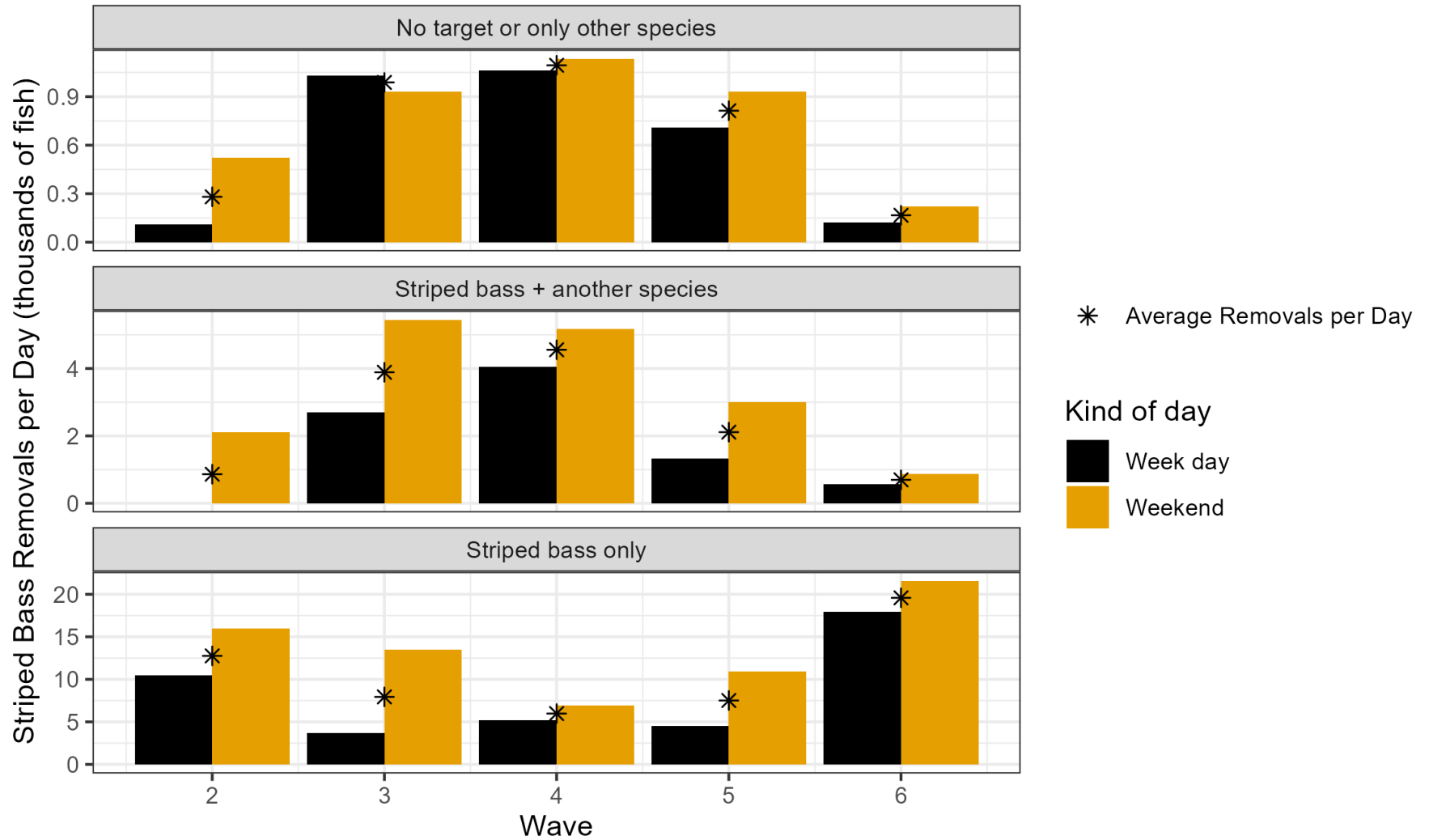


Figure 5. Ocean striped bass removals per day for weekdays (Monday-Thursday) and weekends (Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Federal Holidays). Average removals per day used in seasonal closure analysis shown with asterisk.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfc.org

Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Summary

March 27, 2025

Committee Members: Scott Pearce, Chair, FL; Rob Beal, ME; Chris Baker, MA; Jeff Mercer, RI; Keith Williams, CT; Sean Reilly, NY; Nicholas Couch, DE; Doug Daniels, PA; David Bailey, MD; Matt Rogers, VA; Jason Walker, NC; Michael Paul Thomas, SC; James Cassin, NOAA OLE; Robert Hogan, NOAA GC; Tom Bleifus, USCG

ASMFC Staff: Toni Kerns, Emilie Franke, and Kurt Blanchard

Other Participants: Captain Jack Chapin, Captain Daniel Ipock, Pallavi Javor, Elise Koob, Caitlin Craig, Max Appleman, Brendan Harrison, and Glen Fernandes

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) conducted a virtual meeting on March 27, 2025, to discuss the Striped Bass Plan Development Team (PDT) questions related to Draft Addendum III of the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.

Emilie Franke, ASMFC FMP coordinator, provided the following background to the development of this draft addendum. The PDT is currently developing draft Addendum III with options for striped bass management measures for 2026. The first issue being considered is the 2026 commercial and recreational measures to achieve a reduction in fishery removals to support stock rebuilding. Options will consider commercial quota reductions, recreational size limit changes, and/or recreational seasonal closures (prohibit harvest or prohibit targeting). Recreational mode split options will also be considered. For seasonal closures, options will consider how to split the ocean into different regions with different closures. The second and third issues being considered are requirements for commercial tagging and standardizing how to measure striped bass total length.

The discussion was broken down by specific plan topics and is as follows:

Ocean Regions for Recreational Seasonal Closures

The draft addendum will include options for the following Ocean region splits where each region may have a different recreational season closure. The two considerations are. Should Rhode Island be grouped with New England states, or the Mid-Atlantic states; and Should Delaware through North Carolina be a separate region?

RI with Mid-Atlantic	RI with New England
Region 1: ME-MA Region 2: RI-NC	Region 1: ME-RI Region 2: CT-NC
Region 1: ME-MA Region 2: RI-NJ Region 3: DE-NC	Region 1: ME-RI Region 2: CT-NJ Region 3: DE-NC

The PDT recognizes previous LEC input on the importance of consistency in shared waterbodies. The draft addendum will include a note that if Rhode Island were grouped with the New England states, enforcement in Block Island Sound would be more difficult because Rhode Island may have a different season than Connecticut and New York. Similarly, if New Jersey and Delaware were split into separate regions, which would create challenges in Delaware Bay. Although the PDT notes there seem to be less striped bass fishing activity in Delaware Bay in recent years (more fishing outside of Delaware Bay proper), so this may not be as much of a concern.

PDT question for the LEC:

- Does the LEC have any input on the regional split options for the Ocean?

The consensus from the LEC was to adopt a two-region approach, with Rhode Island being included in the southern region to ensure consistent regulations with the adjoining states, particularly consistency among RI-CT-NY. The rationale behind this decision was that with shared waterbodies like the Block Island Sound or Delaware Bay, consistent regulations between states would be more enforceable. This approach would minimize enforcement challenges and promote better compliance across regions.

If the Board does consider a three-region approach, it would help with enforcement challenges if Delaware were included in the same region as New Jersey. This would minimize enforcement challenges in Delaware Bay.

Recreational Mode Split

Recreational-mode split options will be considered with different size limits and/or different seasonal closures between for-hire (charter/head boat) vs. private/shore anglers. Options could include different size limits by mode and/or different seasons by mode. There was also a Board member request to consider setting days off per week for for-hire instead of a seasonal closure.

PDT questions for the LEC:

- Does the LEC have input on the type of mode split option: different size limit by mode vs. different season by mode?
- Are there certain regions, waterbodies, or time of year when having different regulations by mode would be more difficult?

- Are there concerns regarding differentiating vessels by mode? E.g., small for hire guide vessel vs. a private vessel.
- Any enforcement insight from species that currently have mode splits in place (e.g., black sea bass in some states)?

The LEC agrees that mode splits between Private/Shore and For Hire modes present enforceability issues. While some mode splits are implemented in other fisheries, Law Enforcement is wary of its broad application. Size and possession limits by mode are enforceable but having consistent regulations for all recreational users is more effective. Seasons by mode complicate enforcement, requiring identification of the sector a vessel belongs to and verification of for-hire trips through interviews, vessel monitoring, or other means. A particular challenge is the same vessel could be used for both private trips and for-hire trips, making it difficult to enforce seasons by mode. Specific enforcement challenges may vary by state depending on state permitting requirements and required trip reporting.

Nonetheless, it was acknowledged that for certain regions (e.g., Long Island Sound), the enforcement of distinct mode-specific regulations could be particularly challenging. The LEC emphasized the importance of clear guidelines and robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance and reduce potential conflicts. They advised that careful consideration be given to the specific characteristics of each region and the type of fishing activity predominant there.

Commercial Tagging

Currently for commercial fisheries, states can choose to tag at point of harvest or point of sale. Draft Addendum III will consider requiring all states to tag at point of harvest due to the Board's concerns about the risk of illegal harvest in states with a point of sale tagging program. This would impact MA, RI, and NC which currently require tagging at the point of sale.

PDT questions for the LEC:

- Are there enforcement concerns in MA, RI, or NC about point of sale tagging and illegal harvest?
- Would the point of harvest tag address concerns about illegal market/personal consumption harvest?
- Are there enforcement concerns about illegal market/personal consumption harvest in state with point of harvest tagging?

The majority opinion of the LEC is to support commercial tagging at the point of harvest. This requirement would improve enforcement of possession from the total time the species is in possession, reduce the ability to hi-grade, and increase accountability. Discussion points included safety at sea, tagging at point of landing (one state has implemented this variation), tag accountability, illegal sales, and personal consumption.

An opposing opinion supported tagging at the point of sale. In this discussion, similar points were considered, as well as the need to establish new tagging programs, individual quotas,

the use of Weighmasters, tag accountability, and tracking of unused tags. Some LEC members noted the administrative burden of distributing tags to individual fishers, especially when a state's fishery is not managed with individual quotas. Concerns about sharing tags among fishers were also noted if tagging programs switch to the point of harvest, and it should be considered whether trading tags could potentially outweigh (or even increase) an illegal market fish.

Standardized Total Length Measurement

Currently, state regulations vary about how to measure striped bass for regulatory compliance. Some states already require pinching/squeezing the tail, some states allow angler discretion on whether to pinch the tail, and some states require the tail be left natural or fanned out. The Board has raised concerns that the method of measurement (i.e., fanning of the tail or pinching the tail) can effectively widen the narrow recreational slot and undermine the management program. For example, by forcefully fanning the tail to fall under the maximum size limit. MADMF collected data comparing measured length when pinching the tail to measured length when fanning the tail (MADMF research considered).

The draft addendum will consider for all states to require pinching/squeezing the tail when measuring striped bass total length to address these concerns, especially under the current narrow recreational slot limit. This would be required for both the commercial and recreational sectors. Attached is a list of current state regulatory language. Both RI and MA have nearly identical regulatory language on this issue currently going through their regulatory cycles for possible implementation this year.

PDT questions for the LEC:

- Does the LEC have any input on this measurement issue?
- Any LEC guidance on how general or specific the coastwide FMP should be in regulatory language?
- How does the requirement of 'squeezing the tail' apply to measuring racks/fillets at sea?

The LEC supports a clear definition of how to measure the length of a fish and consistency among states. A fisher-friendly measure would ensure the best voluntary compliance. The same measurement definition should apply when considering a fillet rule; a rack would be measured in the same manner.

Law Enforcement Committee - Meeting Summary - March 27, 2025 – Appendix A

The Striped Bass Plan Development Team (PDT) has requested a more detailed clarifying response from the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) to the following questions related to the development of draft Addendum III to Amendment VII of the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan.

PDT Questions for the LEC:

- Are there specific enforcement concerns in Massachusetts and Rhode Island with current Point of Sale (POS) tagging programs that could be mitigated by switching to a Point of Harvest (POH) tagging program?
- Do POS tagging programs contribute more to illegal market harvests than POH tagging programs?
- Are the states with a POH tagging program experiencing similar or different enforcement challenges compared to states with a POS tagging program?

The PDT's questions were shared with LEC representatives from Massachusetts to North Carolina. Their responses are as follows:

Massachusetts

A Massachusetts representative offered that a POH program improves fishers' catch accountability while on the water. Catch limits can be hard to verify with multiple fishers on board, but POH tagging will help track a fisher's trip limit at sea. It may also prevent high grading of catches, as smaller possession limits would be harder to manipulate. This method offers officers an additional way to address violations related to untagged catches at the POH.

Rhode Island

The nature of the Rhode Island striped bass fishery differs from states with individual quotas. In states that have individual quotas, there is great incentive to sell striped bass in an illegal market and have no record of your individual quota utilization. Point of harvest (POH) tagging gives enforcement the opportunity to prevent this practice and is essential for states with individual quotas.

In Rhode Island, the only specific enforcement concerns that POH tagging could help to address is striped bass legally harvested by licensed commercial fishers being sold on the black-market and/or not being reported. However, the RIDEM Division of Law Enforcement believes that this is not a significant issue and very few fish are meeting this outcome.

Rhode Island has a striped bass season that lasts approximately 10 days with around 250-300 fishers participating, a five fish per day limit, and less than 20 dealers purchasing the fish. It would take a collective effort from fishers to all sell illegal market to increase the number of days the season is open and increase the number of fish that anyone individual could land. Therefore, there is little incentive to sell illegal market as it does not equate to additional fish that an individual fisher could sell.

Most fish being sold at an illegal market are from non-commercial recreational fishers and POH tagging would do little to aid in the enforcement of this issue and could exacerbate it.

Recreational fishers would not be allowed to take a commercial-sized striped bass (there is no overlap in sizes like tautog) whether the fish were tagged at POH or not. The same enforcement efforts and actions are going to take place to combat illegal sales of recreational striped bass if there is POH or POS tagging.

The increased number of tags that would have to be distributed to accommodate POH tagging is of concern to RIDEM DLE. Rhode Island has approximately 1,100 fishers that are licensed to harvest striped bass, but only about 25% of those fishers participate in the fishery. Point of Harvest tagging would necessarily require more tags to be issued to provide for fair access for licensed fishers to harvest and tag a striped bass. RI DEM DLE is concerned that some of these additional tags could be placed on fish prior to being sold on the illegal market, making them indistinguishable from a legally sold fish through a licensed dealer. These tags could be attached to the fish after the season has closed or by recreational fishers who obtained tags from a non-participating commercial license holder. Our enforcement efforts would then be focused on the disposition of unused and unreturned tags (attached to illegal market fish, lost, broken) months after these fish were harvested and these cases would be a challenge to prosecute.

There are certainly practices that could be implemented to limit the amount of tags issued and reduce associated illegal use of the tags, but they would require increased administrative effort and cost and be an inconvenience to the fishers for such a short season.

In summary, POH tagging may aid in reducing the number of unauthorized sales by commercial fishers, but we do not see this as a significant issue with the current POS tagging. We do have concerns about the additional numbers of tags that would be issued with POH tagging and having to switch some of our enforcement efforts to determining the disposition of the unused and unreturned tags. Point of sale (POS) tagging allows RIDEM DLE to primarily focus on a limited number of dealers to monitor catch and ensure the fish are being accurately reported and tagged.

New York

New York uses a POH tagging program for striped bass, with serial numbered tags that include the harvester's permit number to prevent illegal tag transfers. The current tags prevent reuse, addressing past issues where tags could be manipulated. There were credible reports of wholesalers returning tags to harvesters after processing fish.

An illegal market for unpermitted harvest persists, primarily through direct sales to restaurants. Officers rarely inspect these establishments, and the fish are quickly prepared, reducing the chance of discovering untagged fish.

New Jersey

In NJ, striped bass sales are only legal if they are hybrid bass from outside of NJ. Tagging is only required for fish caught in our bonus program, which uses our commercial quota since NJ does not have a typical striped bass fishery outside this program. The bonus program mandates tagging at POH.

Compliance with POH tagging is good, but we have some violations each year. If found guilty, offenders are banned for life from the program. However, if we believe the failure to tag was an honest mistake, we usually issue a summons for undersize and/or overlimit possession.

Delaware

Delaware is a POH tagging state in which fish must be tagged prior to landing. However, to be a true POH tagging state, we would need a regulation change. Based on my experience, I do not believe that there is an illegal market for fish in Delaware.

Delaware also has a requirement that fish be taken to an “official” weight station, where they are weighted, and tagged with a second “weigh station” tag prior to being sold. These weigh stations are run by commercial fishers and/or dealers.

Maryland

Maryland is a POH tagging state. The Interstate Watershed Task Force (IWTF) investigation from 2012 and the findings from this investigation are the reason we have a POH program. Along with adjacent jurisdictions, POH addresses that the fish are tagged correctly and are trackable. The IWTF report provides examples of how POS can be abused. The following is an excerpt from the IWTS report.

LAW ENFORCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the comprehensive investigation and criminal proceeding, the following recommendations were made by the Interstate Task Force and are endorsed by the Law Enforcement Committee of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Recommendations to Improve Enforceability & Accountability:

- *Implement a uniform commercial tagging system among all states where striped bass are harvested and landed for sale. This includes:*
 - *Uniformity by year, style, color, and inscriptions.*
 - *Tags should be valid for one year only.*
 - *Inscriptions should include the year, state, state size limits, and a unique number.*
 - *Use standardized, tamper-proof tags.*
- *Require all fish harvested for sale to be tagged immediately upon possession.*

- *Issue a set number of tags based on a scientific sample of the average (mean) weight of legal-sized fish harvested during the open season for that gear type, divided into the weight quota.*
- *Require all unused tags to be returned annually or seasonally and prohibit license renewal if unused tags are not returned.*
- *Strengthen reporting of tag numbers used on dealer reports or trip tickets.*
- *Implement license revocation or suspension as a primary penalty for state or federal violations.*
- *Ensure that law enforcement officers have real-time access to the tag numbers issued to each fisher.*

Virginia

Since the late 1990's Virginia has had a point of harvest tagging program. In terms of which is better, I support POH tagging for enforceability especially considering the penalty for violation of the regulation. LE has and will always have those violators attempting to skirt the regulation. Charging offenders is easy, due to the tagging requirement. Conviction in court is another whole issue. Since my time with the agency, LE has prosecuted several Lacy Act cases for striped bass. Unfortunately, I do not believe there is a method that is perfect. I can see pros and cons in both.

North Carolina

NC has point of sale tagging. There has not been a commercial ocean fishing season for these fish in over 10 years, and there was minimal illegal market activity in the last open seasons.

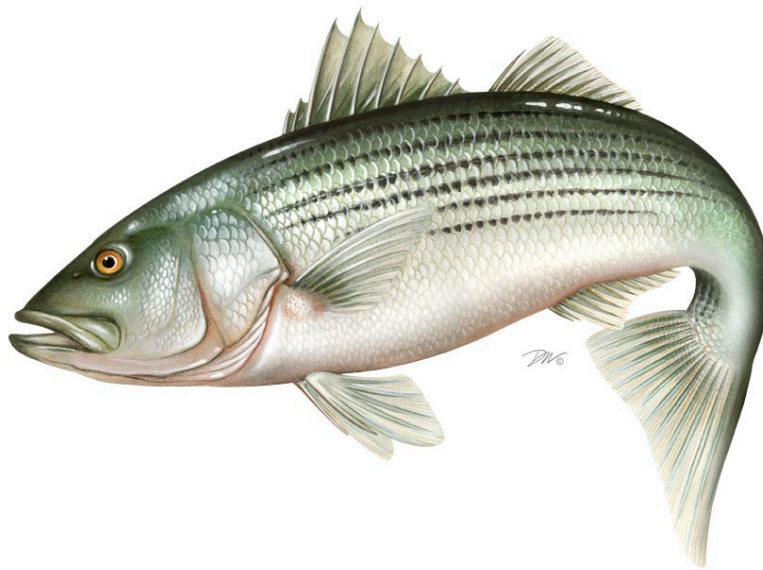
Summary

The LEC considers POH tagging to be more effective in resource protection than POS tagging. Both types of programs face similar enforcement challenges, such as proving who is in possession and who may have sold the fish. The primary concern for enforcement appears to be illegal sales of striped bass to restaurants. POH tagging mitigates these challenges by providing better accountability on the water and enabling law enforcement to track a fish from its origin. Supporters of POS programs cite tag accountability, shorter seasons, and smaller possession limits as benefits. Recommendations from the IWTF in 2012 remain relevant to today's striped bass commercial fisheries.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

DRAFT ADDENDUM III TO AMENDMENT 7 TO THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

***Recreational and Commercial Management Measures,
Commercial Tagging Programs, Defining Total Length Measurement***



This draft document was developed for Management Board review and discussion. This document is not intended to solicit public comment as part of the Commission/State formal public input process. Comments on this draft document may be given at the appropriate time on the agenda during the scheduled meeting. If approved, a public comment period will be established to solicit input on the issues contained in the document.

April 2025



Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Public Comment Process and Proposed Timeline

In December 2024, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum III to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass to consider recreational and commercial management measures for 2026 to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. The Draft Addendum will also consider the point of harvest versus point of sale tagging for commercial tagging programs and a coastwide definition of ‘total length’ as it applies to striped bass size limit regulations. This Draft Addendum presents background on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (Commission) management of Atlantic striped bass; the addendum process and timeline; a statement of the problem; and management options for public consideration and comment.

The public is encouraged to submit comments regarding the proposed management options in this document at any time during the addendum process. The final date comments will be accepted is ____ at **11:59 p.m. EST**. Comments may be submitted by mail, email or online. If you have any questions or would like to submit comments, please use the contact information below.

1. **Mail:** Emilie Franke, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 1050 N. Highland St. Suite 200A-N, Arlington, VA 22201
2. **Email:** comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Striped Bass Draft Addendum III)
3. **Online:** _____ [link]

Date	Action
December 2024	Board initiated the Draft Addendum
February 2025	Board provided additional guidance on scope of options for development
February – April 2025	Plan Development Team (PDT) developed Draft Addendum document
May 2025	Board reviews and approves Draft Addendum III for public comment
June – mid July 2025	Public comment period, including public hearings
August 2025	Board reviews public comment, selects management measures, final approval of Addendum III

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 OVERVIEW	1
2.1 Statement of the Problem.....	1
2.2 Background.....	2
2.2.1 Status of the Stock	2
2.2.2 Status of Management	3
2.2.3 Status of the Commercial Fishery.....	4
2.2.4 Status of the Recreational Fishery	6
2.2.5 Social and Economic Considerations	8
2.2.6 Seasonality of Recreational Catch and Effort	9
2.2.7 Equity Considerations for Ocean Regions and Chesapeake Bay Season Closures.....	12
2.2.8 Other Species Commonly Caught and Targeted in the Striped Bass Recreational Fishery	13
2.2.9 Examples of Recent Recreational Seasonal Closures: Maryland and North Carolina.....	14
3.0 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	16
3.1 Method to Measure Total Length of a Striped Bass	17
3.2 Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of Sale vs. Point of Harvest.....	18
3.3 Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding	20
4.0 COMPLIANCE SCHEDULE	37
REFERENCES	38
FIGURES	39
Appendix A.	44
2024 Management Measures by State	44
Appendix B.	48
Percent Standard Error (PSE) for Seasonal Closure Options.....	48
Appendix C.	49
Striped Bass Total Length Measurement Analysis	49
Appendix D.	50
State-Specific Recreational Seasonality Summary.....	50
Appendix E.....	52
Other Species Analysis and Figures.....	52

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Atlantic striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) are managed through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) in state waters (0–3 miles) and through NOAA Fisheries in federal waters (3–200 miles). The management unit includes the coastal migratory stock from Maine through North Carolina. State waters fisheries for Atlantic striped bass are currently managed under Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and its Addenda (I and II). Harvesting or targeting striped bass in federal waters has been prohibited by NOAA Fisheries since 1990.

In December 2024, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board (Board) initiated Addendum III to Amendment 7 to support rebuilding the stock to its target spawning stock biomass level by 2029. The Board initiated the draft addendum via the following approved motion:

Move to initiate an addendum to support striped bass rebuilding by 2029 in consideration of 2024 recreational and commercial mortality while balancing socioeconomic impacts. Options should include, if needed, a range of overall reductions, consideration of recreational versus commercial contributions to the reductions, recreational season and size changes taking into account regional variability of availability, and no harvest versus no target closures. Final action shall be taken by the annual 2025 meeting to be in place for the 2026 recreational and commercial fisheries.

In February 2025, the Board requested options to achieve a 60% probability of rebuilding in addition to options for a 50% probability of rebuilding; requested recreational mode split options be developed; clarified that options should not consider changes to possession limits; provided direction on the type of recreational size limits and scope of seasonal closure options to consider; added an option to consider requiring commercial tagging at the point of harvest instead of allowing states to choose between tagging at the point of harvest or point of sale; and added an option to consider standardizing the definition of ‘total length’ to address concerns about the lack of consistent measurement of striped bass for regulatory compliance, particularly within narrow slot limits.

2.0 OVERVIEW

2.1 Statement of the Problem

Atlantic striped bass were declared overfished in 2019 and are subject to a rebuilding plan that requires the stock to be rebuilt to its spawning stock biomass target by 2029. The most recent stock projections estimate an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 due to the above average 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit, and there is concern about the lack of strong year-classes behind the 2018 year-class. Adjusting the subsequent 2026 management measures could increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029.

The Atlantic Striped Bass FMP’s commercial tagging requirement has been in place for over a decade. Currently, states with commercial fisheries are allowed to choose whether to tag harvested fish at the point of harvest or the point of sale. There are concerns that waiting to tag

harvested fish until the point of sale could increase the risk of illegal harvest, so this addendum considers whether to require commercial tagging at the point of harvest with the goal of improving enforcement and compliance. This would impact three states that currently require tagging at the point of sale. However, differences among states' commercial management systems and how each state manages its current tagging program make it difficult to determine whether requiring the same type of tagging program across all states would decrease the risk of illegal harvest in every state.

The Atlantic Striped Bass FMP specifies size limit regulations in total length (TL), but it does not define a specific method for measuring TL. Consequently, current state regulations vary on how to measure a striped bass for regulatory compliance. There is concern that the lack of coastwide standards for the method of measurement is undermining the intended conservation, consistency, and enforceability of the size limits. This addendum considers implementing coast-wide requirements for the states' regulatory definition of TL as it applies to striped bass size limits for the recreational and commercial fisheries.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Status of the Stock

Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality (F) are estimated on a regular basis and compared to target and threshold levels (i.e., biological reference points) to assess the status of the striped bass stock. The 1995 estimate of female SSB is used as the SSB threshold because many stock characteristics, such as an expanded age structure, were reached by this year, and this is also the year the stock was declared recovered. The female SSB target is equal to 125% of the female SSB threshold. The associated F threshold and F target are calculated to achieve the respective SSB reference points in the long term.

The most recent assessment for striped bass was an update completed in 2024 with data through 2023, including a partial year of fishery data under the 2023 Emergency Action. The 2024 Stock Assessment Update found the stock was not experiencing overfishing in 2023 ($F = 0.18$, below the threshold of 0.21 but above the target of 0.17) but remained overfished (Female SSB = 191 million pounds, just below the threshold of 197 million pounds and below the target of 247 million pounds; Figure 1 and Figure 2). This was the same stock status as the prior 2022 Stock Assessment Update. Both the 2022 and 2024 assessments used the "low recruitment assumption" to calculate the reference points (per Amendment 7's requirement under a tripped recruitment trigger), which resulted in a lower, more conservative F target and threshold compared to the 2018 benchmark assessment. Although below the threshold and considered overfished, female SSB in 2023 increased since the prior assessment and was still estimated to be well above SSB levels from the 1980s, when the stock was considered collapsed (Figure 1).

The assessment also indicated a period of strong recruitment (numbers of age-1 fish entering the population) from 1994–2004, followed by a period of low recruitment from 2005–2011 (although not as low as the period of stock collapse in the early 1980s; Figure 1). This period of

low recruitment contributed to the decline in SSB that the stock has experienced since 2010. Recruitment of age-1 fish was high in 2012, 2015, 2016, and 2019 (corresponding to strong 2011, 2014, 2015, and 2018 year classes, respectively); however, estimates of age-1 striped bass were below the long-term average for seven of the last ten years.

The next stock assessment for striped bass is a benchmark stock assessment—in which the assessment input data and methods are fully re-evaluated—scheduled for peer review in Spring 2027. The 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment will include data through 2025.

Stock projections were updated in March 2025 to include a preliminary estimate of 2024 fishery removals. 2024 preliminary removals were estimated using the 2024 preliminary recreational estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and accounted for an estimated 7% decrease in commercial removals due to Addendum II's 7% quota reduction implemented in 2024.

The Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee (TC) also reviewed assumptions about fishing mortality levels from 2025 through 2029 included in the projections. Under status quo management, 2025 fishing mortality is predicted to increase as the above average 2018 year-class enters the current recreational ocean slot limit, followed by a predicted decrease in fishing mortality in 2026 as the 2018 year-class starts to grow out of that ocean slot limit with a lack of strong year classes following. For the 2025 increase, the TC determined the best assumption is a 17% increase from the 2024 level based on the observed 17% increase from 2021 to 2023 when part of the 2015 year-class was still in the newly reduced ocean slot limit. The TC noted the magnitude of increase may be overestimated since the 2018 year-class is not as strong as the 2015 year-class was. For 2026 through 2029, the TC determined the best assumption is a decrease back to the 2024 fishing mortality level in 2026 and maintain that level through 2029. This is a reasonable assumption under the same narrow slot limit with an above-average year-class growing out of the slot.

With these assumptions about 2025-2029 fishing mortality under status quo management, the projections estimate a 49% probability of being at or above the SSB target in 2029. This would require a 1% reduction in 2026 removals to achieve $F_{\text{rebuild}} 50\%$ and a 7% reduction in 2026 removals to achieve $F_{\text{rebuild}} 60\%$. The TC also continues to highlight several major sources of uncertainty in the projections and the difficulty of predicting future fishing mortality rates.

2.2.2 Status of Management

Atlantic striped bass were declared overfished in 2019 and are subject to a rebuilding plan that requires the stock to be rebuilt to its spawning stock biomass target by 2029. In 2020, Addendum VI to Amendment 6 implemented management measures designed to achieve an 18% reduction in fishery removals to reduce fishing mortality. Those measures were in place until 2023, when the Board approved an emergency action in May of that year to change the recreational size limit in response to the unprecedented magnitude of 2022 recreational harvest, which was nearly double that of 2021, and associated updated stock rebuilding projections. Specifically, the Board's May 2, 2023 emergency action required all states to

implement a 31-inch maximum size limit for their striped bass recreational fisheries (excluding the Chesapeake Bay striped bass trophy fisheries) as soon as possible and no later than July 2, 2023, while maintaining all other measures. The 31-inch maximum size limit was intended to reduce harvest on the strong 2015 year-class. In effect, the emergency action reduced the ocean recreational slot from 28" to <35" to 28" – 31", and added a 31" maximum size to the Chesapeake Bay's recreational measures. The emergency action was effective until May 1, 2024, at which point it was replaced by Addendum II to Amendment 7 measures.

Addendum II was approved in January 2024 to reduce fishing mortality in 2024 and support stock rebuilding. For the ocean recreational fishery, the Addendum implemented a 28" to 31" slot limit, 1-fish bag limit, and maintained 2022 season dates for all fishery participants; this maintained the same ocean recreational measures adopted under the 2023 emergency action. For the Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, the Addendum implemented a 19" to 24" slot limit, 1-fish bag limit, and maintained 2022 season dates for all fishery participants. For the commercial fishery, the Addendum reduced commercial quotas by 7% in both the ocean and Chesapeake Bay. To address concerns about recreational filleting allowances and compliance with recreational size limits, the Addendum established two requirements for states that authorize at-sea/shore-side filleting of striped bass: racks must be retained and possession limited to no more than two fillets per legal fish. Finally, to enable an expedited response process to upcoming stock assessments, the Addendum established a mechanism allowing the Board to respond to a stock assessment via Board action if the stock is not projected to rebuild by 2029 with a probability greater than or equal to 50%. All Addendum II measures were required to be implemented by the states no later than May 1, 2024.

2.2.3 Status of the Commercial Fishery

From 2020-2023, the commercial sector accounted for on average 12% of total removals per year in numbers of fish. The commercial fishery is managed by a quota system resulting in relatively stable landings since 2004 (Figure 3). There are two regional quotas; one for the Chesapeake Bay area and one for the ocean area, which includes other bays, inland rivers, and estuaries. In 2023, the ocean commercial striped bass quota was 2.3 million pounds with roughly 1.7 million pounds harvested in the ocean region. In the Chesapeake Bay region, the 2023 commercial striped bass quota was 3.0 million pounds, and roughly 2.5 million pounds were harvested. Neither quota was exceeded in 2023. Refer to Appendix A. for 2023 commercial fishery regulations by state, including size limits, trip limits, gear restrictions, and seasons. 2024 estimates of commercial harvest will be available in Summer 2025.

The ocean region regularly underutilizes its cumulative quota due to lack of striped bass availability in some state waters (particularly North Carolina, which holds 13% of the ocean quota, yet has had zero ocean harvest since 2013) coupled with prohibitions on commercial striped bass fishing in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New Jersey (which collectively share about 10% of the ocean commercial quota). The ocean commercial quota utilization was 74.5% in 2023, which was only a slight decrease from 77% quota utilization in 2022. In the ocean, each state that allows commercial harvest utilized 94-98% of their ocean quota in 2023,

with the exception of North Carolina which had zero ocean harvest. Ocean quota utilization in 2022 and 2023 was still well above the low quota utilization in 2020 at 55%.

In the Chesapeake Bay, quota utilization was about the same in 2023 as it was in 2022 at about 84%. In the past five years, 2018-2019 were the highest quota utilization years at about 91-92% utilized, while 2020 was the lowest recent quota utilization at 76%.

From 2004-2014, coastwide commercial landings averaged 6.8 million pounds per year. From 2015-2019, commercial landings decreased to an average of 4.7 million pounds due to implementation of reduced quotas through Addendum IV. From 2020-2023, coastwide commercial landings decreased again to an average 4.1 million pounds due to further reduced quotas through Addendum VI to Amendment 6 and Amendment 7.

Since 1990, commercial landings from the ocean fishery have accounted for an average 40% of total coastwide commercial landings by weight, with the other 60% coming from the Chesapeake Bay. The proportion of commercial harvest coming from Chesapeake Bay is much higher in numbers of fish (roughly 80%) because fish harvested in Chesapeake Bay have a lower average weight than fish harvested in ocean fisheries.

Of total commercial harvest (combined ocean and Chesapeake Bay) by weight in 2023, Maryland landed 33%, Virginia landed 22%, Massachusetts landed 16%, and New York landed 15%. Additional harvest came from the Potomac River (9%), Delaware (3%), and Rhode Island (confidential).

Ocean commercial size limits, seasons, and gear types vary by state. Along the Atlantic coast, current legal minimum size ranges from 20" to 35". In general, lower minimum sizes exist in the Mid-Atlantic (where fish are primarily harvested by a combination of drift and anchor gill nets), while New England states have larger minimum sizes and harvest is predominantly hook and line. In the ocean region, only New York currently has a commercial slot size with lower and upper bounds (26–38"). Chesapeake Bay commercial size limits and gear types are more uniform with an 18" minimum size for Bay states, although Maryland has a year-round maximum size (36") while PRFC and Virginia have seasonal maximum size limits of 36" and 28", respectively. All three Bay states employ a combination of pound net, gill nets, and hook and line gear types.

How each state manages their commercial quota varies (e.g., some states manage their quota through an ITQ system), and one state (New Jersey) currently reallocates its commercial quota to the recreational sector through a quota-managed recreational bonus program.

Participation in each state's commercial fishery has varied over time (Table 1). There are likely several factors contributing to year-to-year participation in the fishery. These factors could include changes in available quota, state licensing and/or permitting, striped bass availability, other species availability, individual socioeconomic circumstances, changing demographics in the fishery, closed areas, and individual quota transfers/consolidation where applicable.

Table 1. Number of commercial harvesters landing striped bass by state from 2015-2024. Source: MADMF, RIDEM, NYSDEC, DENREC, MDDNR, PRFC, VMRC.

	MA	RI	NY	DE*	MD Ocean	MD Ches. Bay	PRFC	VA Ocean	VA Ches. Bay
2015	1,154	293	362	51	26	493	371	19	277
2016	1,233	267	370	45	23	494	347	18	267
2017	1,224	286	379	42	33	505	328	18	257
2018	1,308	269	345	41	33	464	282	19	260
2019	1,226	268	283	40	32	462	294	18	240
2020	658	231	346	38	44	414	264	18	218
2021	732	234	377	41	40	447	262	18	212
2022	1,038	256	376	40	41	419	264	17	231
2023	1,046	236	375	37	40	447	253	19	228
2024	940	261	377	37	43	415	Data Not Yet Available		

*Delaware number of gill net harvesters only, which account for greater than 99% of Delaware's commercial striped bass harvest.

2.2.4 Status of the Recreational Fishery

Note: This section includes preliminary 2024 MRIP estimates.

The majority of striped bass fishery removals are from the recreational sector, accounting for 88% of total removals on average per year in numbers of fish from 2020-2023. The recreational fishery is managed by bag limits, minimum size or slot size limits, and closed seasons (in some states) to restrict harvest. Gear restrictions are also in place to increase the chance of survival after a striped bass is released alive in the recreational fishery. Recreational removals (harvest and release mortality) account for a vast majority (86-90% each year) of total striped bass fishery removals (recreational and commercial sectors combined).

Total recreational removals (harvest and release mortality) coastwide were estimated at 3.2 million fish in 2024, which is a 35% decrease from recreational removals in 2023 (Figure 3). This coastwide decrease in total recreational removals was a combination of a decrease in both harvest and live releases. By mode, combined private vessel/shore modes of the recreational striped bass fishery accounted for 97% of ocean recreational removals in 2024, while for-hire components (charter and head boats) accounted for about 3% of ocean removals. In the Chesapeake Bay, private vessels/shore modes accounted for 83% of Bay recreational removals in 2024, while for-hire modes accounted for 17%.

The vast majority of recreational striped bass catch (over 90%) is released alive either due to angler preference or regulation (i.e., closed season, undersized, oversized, or already caught the bag limit). The stock assessment assumes, based on previous studies, that 9% of fish that are released alive die as a result of being caught. In 2024, recreational anglers caught and released an estimated 18.0 million fish, of which 1.6 million are assumed to have died. This

represents a 31% decrease in live releases coastwide from the 2023 level. By region in 2024, the ocean saw a 32% decrease in live releases and the Chesapeake Bay saw a 26% decrease in live releases.

Recreational harvest in 2024 decreased to 1.6 million fish (13.9 million pounds) from the 2023 level of 2.6 million fish (23.9 million pounds), which is a 39% decrease by number. By region, both the ocean and Chesapeake Bay regions saw a decrease in recreational harvest in 2024 relative to 2023, with the Bay seeing a larger reduction of 58% and the ocean seeing a 34% reduction in harvest. The larger reduction in recreational harvest in the Chesapeake Bay could be attributed, at least partly, to the implementation of a Bay wide 19"-24" slot limit in 2024 under Addendum II and to the lack of strong year-classes available in the Bay in 2024. In the ocean, most of the remaining fish from the strong 2015 year-class (age-9 in 2024) had likely grown out of the narrow 28"-31" ocean slot limit by 2024, potentially contributing to the decrease. However, it is important to note that changes in effort can also impact harvest.

In 2024, New Jersey landed the largest proportion of recreational harvest in number of fish (38%), followed by New York (21%), Massachusetts (17%), and Maryland (13%). The proportion of coastwide recreational harvest in numbers from Chesapeake Bay was estimated at 15% in 2024, which along with the 2022-2023 Chesapeake Bay proportions of 20% and 22%, respectively, are the lowest since the stock recovered in the 1990s. This decrease in the proportion of recreational harvest from the Chesapeake Bay in recent years, and therefore increased proportion of ocean recreational harvest, aligns with the availability of the strong 2015-year class in the ocean fishery in 2022-2023, implementation of a Chesapeake Bay-wide slot limit in 2024, and decrease in Maryland's for-hire bag limit from 2-fish to 1-fish in 2024. Additionally, as the last above average year-class (2018) move out of the Chesapeake Bay after 2023, there are no strong year classes following.

Similar to the change in recreational harvest, the number of trips directed at striped bass (primary and secondary target) also shows a larger reduction in the Bay as compared to the ocean (Figure 4). In 2024, relative to 2023 the number of striped bass directed trips in the Chesapeake Bay region decreased by about 41%, while the number of striped bass directed trips in the ocean decreased by about 13%. Overall, the total number of coastwide striped bass directed trips in 2024 decreased by 16% from 2023 and is even lower than the number of directed trips in 2019-2021.

When considering recreational harvest and directed trips by mode, the magnitude of change from 2023 to 2024 differs between the for-hire modes and the private-shore modes by region. Private boat-shore harvest in 2024 decreased by 35% in the ocean and 58% in the Chesapeake Bay. For-hire harvest in the ocean decreased by only 9% while for-hire harvest in the Chesapeake Bay decreased by 57% in 2024. For directed trips, private boat-shore directed trips in 2024 decreased by about 13% in the ocean and decreased by 41% in the Chesapeake Bay. For-hire directed trips in the ocean in 2024 decreased by about 16%, while for-hire directed trips in the Chesapeake Bay decreased by 38% according to MRIP. Similar decreases in the number of Maryland Chesapeake Bay for hire trips catching striped bass were noted in

Maryland's for-hire logbooks which decreased 43% from 2023 to 2024. Again, these data indicate larger reductions in recreational harvest and directed trips in the Chesapeake Bay in 2024 relative to 2023 than the ocean region.

Overall, there are several factors that contribute to trends in recreational catch and effort, including management measures, year class availability, overall stock abundance, nearshore availability of bait and striped bass, and angler behavior. The relatively strong 2015-year class moving into the ocean and becoming available to the ocean slot (i.e., those 2015-year class fish surpassing 28-inches), was likely the primary driver of increased ocean recreational catch in 2022. The subsequent emergency action in 2023 intended to reduce harvest of the 2015-year class likely contributed to the harvest reduction observed in 2023. The 2015 year-class grew out of the ocean slot by 2024 (i.e., surpassing 31-inches) likely contributing to the decreases in ocean recreational catch in 2024. In the Chesapeake Bay, a combination of the five-inch recreational slot limit implemented in 2024 and the lack of strong year classes available after the 2018 year-class moved into the ocean likely played a role. Angler effort and behavior are also important to consider. When more fish are available in the fishery, effort can often increase in response. When narrower size limits are in place or less fish are available in the fishery, anglers may change their behavior and level of effort.

2.2.5 Social and Economic Considerations

For the commercial sector, reductions in quota would likely reduce profits for striped bass commercial harvesters and may increase the consumer price of striped bass. The impacts of a quota reduction will vary depending on individual harvester circumstances, such as what portion of a harvester's current business is dependent on striped bass and the ability to switch to commercial fisheries for other species. Since there have been multiple striped bass commercial quota reductions in the past decade, harvesters may have already had to diversify their businesses and/or could eventually reach a point where harvesting striped bass is no longer profitable.

For the recreational sector, changes in seasonal closures, size and bag limits, and other measures affect important attributes of a recreational fishing trip, such as when during the year an angler is allowed to keep a fish. In turn, these changes in trip attributes will modify the utility (i.e., level of satisfaction) an angler expects to obtain from the fishing trip (McConnell et al. 1995, Haab and McConnell 2003). As a result, the angler may shift target species, modify trip duration or location, or decide not to take the trip and do something else instead. These behavioral responses lead to changes in directed fishing effort, with accompanying changes in harvest, fishing mortality, and angler welfare.

A reduction in effort could have a negative impact on the regional economy and businesses associated with the fishing industry for striped bass. This may only be a short-term response, and stock dynamics will dictate any longer-term effects on the resource and the angling community. Impacts on for-hire businesses will likely vary depending on individual business circumstances. If changes in seasonal closures or size limits reduce the number of striped bass trips for-hire businesses are able to book, the economic impacts will likely depend on whether

the business can switch to target other species that are of interest to anglers. Managers have to weigh potential negative effects on anglers and businesses with potential long-term positive effects on the stock and future fishing experience.

Angler response to recreational seasonal closures is difficult to predict. If striped bass harvest is prohibited during a closure, anglers could choose to catch-and-release striped bass, target another species, or choose not to fish at all. If targeting striped bass is prohibited, anglers could target another species or choose not to fish at all. Individual angler preferences and availability of other species are a few of many factors that would shape angler response to seasonal closures. See the following sections 2.2.6 through 2.2.8 for context on the seasonality of the recreational striped bass fishery and other species commonly caught and targeted with striped bass.

Narrow slot limits, like the 2023 emergency action and Addendum II recreational slot limits (28" to 31" for the ocean and 19" to 24" for the Chesapeake Bay) lead to fish in the larger size range being released. Recent research into striped bass anglers' preferences and behavior found the typical striped bass angler prefers to keep larger fish (Carr-Harris and Steinback 2020). Applying this to a 28" to 31" slot limit, anglers would likely prefer to keep a fish greater than 31" rather than having to release it, which means that in the short-term, a narrow slot limit like 28" to 31" may reduce effort (i.e., reduce trips) from those anglers seeking to bring fish home in the cooler. Conversely, any high minimum size or slot limit options being considered (e.g., 37" to 40" slot) may be desirable for striped bass anglers who prefer to keep a larger fish, but this size limit would make it more difficult for shore anglers to catch a legal sized fish, given the smaller size of fish generally available inshore, which may also reduce effort and raise environmental justice issues.

To evaluate the effects of management options in the future, a bioeconomic model could be developed for striped bass to assess impacts of management options and feedback between fish stocks and angler decision-making, as currently done for other species such as summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Assessing the fishery impacts and potential success of proposed policy measures requires a predictive bioeconomic model that links angler participation and decision-making to changes in management measures, stock levels, and fishing conditions (Holzer and McConnell 2017, Lee et al. 2017). While there is some past striped bass work on angler preferences that could inform a potential bioeconomic model (Carr-Harris and Steinback 2020, Murphy et al. 2019), resources are needed to fully develop the economic component of the model to incorporate with the biological model. [Amendment 7](#) outlines those and other socioeconomic research needs.

2.2.6 Seasonality of Recreational Catch and Effort

Recreational removals, including harvest and live releases, were analyzed by state and wave to inform timing of state recreational fisheries throughout the year. MRIP data were pooled from 2021 through 2024 from Maine through North Carolina to identify commonalities between states regarding availability of fish (total removals), harvest, and effort (directed striped bass trips). Data from 2023 were not included in the ocean analysis due to the mid-year regulatory

change from the ASMFC adopting the narrow 28" to 31" recreational slot limit through emergency action. North Carolina MRIP data were not included since North Carolina only attributes waves 1 and 6 ocean recreational catch to the ocean stock and that catch has been minimal (zero recreational harvest for several years, 2021-2022 releases were 0.1% of total ocean releases, zero 2024 releases). State-by-state descriptions of catch by wave are available in Appendix D.

For all states in the Ocean fishery, total recreational removals were dominated by live releases (Table 2) and trips that caught striped bass are dominated by those only releasing striped bass (Table 3). It should be noted that North Carolina is the only state to conduct MRIP sampling in wave 1 (Jan-Feb) and therefore is the only state with wave 1 (Jan-Feb) removals which are solely comprised of live releases. Massachusetts through Virginia conduct MRIP sampling from wave 2 (Mar-Apr) through wave 6 (Nov-Dec), while Maine and New Hampshire only conduct MRIP sampling from wave 3 through wave 5 (May-Oct).

In the northern states of Maine and New Hampshire, peak removals (number of fish) and effort (millions of trips) occur in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) (Figure 5, Table 4).

The states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware all have some level of removals in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec). Peak removals and effort vary by state for Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Massachusetts removals peak in waves 3 – 4 (May-Aug), Rhode Island removals peak in wave 3 (May-Jun), and both states have peak effort in wave 4 (Jul-Aug). Connecticut removals peak in wave 2 (Mar-Apr) with effort peaking in wave 3 (May-June).

In the Mid-Atlantic states, availability occurs in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with New York, New Jersey, and Delaware all having peak removals in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) and effort varying by state. Effort in New York is consistent in waves 2 – 3 (Mar-Jun) and 5 – 6 (Sep-Dec). New Jersey effort is high in wave 2 (Mar-Apr) and peaks in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) and Delaware effort is high in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) and peaks in wave 2 (Mar-Apr). Peak removals and effort for Maryland and North Carolina in the ocean peak in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) while in Virginia, peak removals occur in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) but peak effort occurs in wave 5 (Sep-Oct) for the ocean fishery. It should be noted that PSEs for Delaware through North Carolina can be relatively high.

In the Chesapeake Bay fish are available in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with peak removals occurring in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) (Figure 7). Harvest and effort for Maryland and Virginia peak in wave 3 (May-Jun) and wave 6 (Nov-Dec), respectively (Figure 8). Note this analysis covers the time period after implementation of no-targeting closures for part of wave 2 (Mar-Apr) and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) in Maryland Chesapeake Bay; the timing of peak harvest and effort in Maryland Chesapeake Bay prior to these closures (pre-2020) may have been different.

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table 2. Percent of total striped bass removals for each state and wave that are live releases in the ocean region. Source: MRIP 2021-2022-2024 data.

Wave	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC*
Wave 1 (Jan/Feb)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Wave 2 (Mar/Apr)	X	X	100%	100%	100%	93%	91%	98%	100%	0%	0%
Wave 3 (May/June)	98%	98%	96%	95%	93%	87%	84%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Wave 4 (July/Aug)	97%	97%	91%	92%	92%	86%	97%	97%	100%	100%	0%
Wave 5 (Sep/Oct)	99%	96%	94%	95%	98%	81%	89%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Wave 6 (Nov/Dec)	X	X	100%	100%	100%	94%	87%	99%	98%	0%	100%

X indicates MRIP sampling does not occur during that wave.

*NC only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal migratory stock.

Table 3. Proportion of trips landing striped bass and trips only releasing striped bass (i.e., no harvest) for all 2021-2024 trips that caught striped bass.

	% Trips Landing SB	% Trips Only Releasing SB
ME	9	91
NH	11	89
MA	20	80
RI	13	87
CT	12	88
NY	29	71
NJ	35	65
DE	4	96
MD Ocean	5	95
VA Ocean	0	100
MD Ches. Bay	29	71
VA Ches. Bay	23	77

Table 4. Proportion of each state's directed striped bass trips by wave in the ocean region. Source: MRIP data 2021-2022-2024.

Wave	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC*
Wave 1 Jan/Feb	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	19%
Wave 2 Mar/Apr	X	X	5%	21%	23%	22%	27%	32%	10%	0%	0%
Wave 3 May/June	27%	25%	28%	24%	29%	22%	20%	22%	38%	0%	0%
Wave 4 July/Aug	47%	43%	39%	25%	19%	13%	4%	8%	3%	0%	0%
Wave 5 Sep/Oct	26%	32%	22%	19%	18%	21%	15%	9%	9%	58%	0%
Wave 6 Nov/Dec	X	X	6%	12%	10%	21%	33%	29%	40%	42%	81%

X indicates MRIP sampling does not occur during that wave.

*NC only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal migratory stock.

2.2.7 Equity Considerations for Ocean Regions and Chesapeake Bay Season Closures

Ocean Regional Approach 1: Maine – Massachusetts and Rhode Island – North Carolina

The states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts all have the majority of their total removals (Figure 5), all of their harvest (Figure 6), and 89 – 100 % of their directed trips (Table 4) in waves 3 – 5 (May – Oct.). A seasonal closure in waves 1 (Jan-Feb), 2 (Mar-Apr), and/or 6 (Nov-Dec) for these states will not be impactful, therefore options in the draft addendum were limited to waves 3 – 5 (May – Oct.). All 3 states have their peak removals and harvest occurring wave 4 (Jul-Aug) however Massachusetts comprises 85% of harvest, 64% of releases, and 65% of total removals in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) for these states.

For the Rhode Island through North Carolina ocean region, total removals peak in Rhode Island in wave 3 (May-Jun); CT in wave 2 (Mar-Apr); New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina in wave 6 (Nov-Dec); and Virginia in wave 4 (Jul-Aug). As peak total removals vary by state across four waves, a no-targeting closure in a single wave to reduce total removals in this region is likely to be inequitable. As a result, a closure across two waves, for example requiring all states to implement closures in wave 3 (May-Jun) and wave 6 (Nov-Dec), may be more effective in addressing equity concerns.

Harvest in the Rhode Island through North Carolina region peaks in wave 3 (May-Jun) for Rhode Island and Connecticut; wave 6 (Nov-Dec) for New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland; with no ocean harvest occurring in either Virginia or North Carolina. As a result, a single-wave no-harvest closure for this region would not have equal impacts across all states. A no-harvest closure across two waves in this region could address inequity closures. For example, a no-harvest closure in waves 3 (May-Jun) and 6 (Nov-Dec) would impact all states in the region with Rhode Island and Connecticut being more impacted by the wave 3 (May-Jun) closure and New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina being more impacted by the wave 6 (Nov-Dec) closure.

Ocean Regional Approach 2: Maine – Rhode Island and Connecticut – North Carolina

Under this regional approach, Rhode Island would be shifted and included with the northern states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. However, unlike Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts which have peak removals, harvest, and effort in wave 4 (Jul-Aug), Rhode Island peak removals and harvest occur in wave 3 (May-Jun) with nearly equal peak effort in waves 3 (May-Jun) and 4 (Jul-Aug). A no-targeting or no-harvest closure in a single wave under this region may not be equitable across all states. Additionally, by Rhode Island being included in this region, they would likely have a different seasonal closure than Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. This may create challenges in the state waters around Block Island as anglers from Rhode Island through New Jersey fish in these waters and would be following different regulations. The Law Enforcement Committee noted concern about different seasons for states around Block Island Sound.

For Connecticut through North Carolina, inequities would likely still exist among these states with a single wave no-harvest or no-targeting closure for the same reasons outlined in Regional Approach 1.

Chesapeake Bay State Closures

In the Chesapeake Bay, both Maryland and Virginia have peak removals in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) which could translate into an equitable single-wave no-targeting closure. Harvest in Maryland is consistent in waves 3 – 6 (May-Dec) with Virginia peak harvest occurring in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) followed by wave 3 (May-Jun). A single-wave no-harvest closure in these states could also be equitable depending on the wave chosen (i.e. depending on when each jurisdiction has season closures already in place).

2.2.8 Other Species Commonly Caught and Targeted in the Striped Bass Recreational Fishery

Effects of striped bass seasonal closures on angler behavior are highly speculative, but a possible result of such closures could be anglers switching effort to other species. This analysis considers which species are often targeted on the same trip as striped bass and which species are often caught on trips that also catch striped bass. While this may provide some insight into which other species may be available to anglers if striped bass seasonal closures are implemented, it is important to note that some of these species are only co-targeted and caught with striped bass because anglers are already targeting striped bass. If anglers are no longer targeting striped bass, anglers may not necessarily switch to these other species. They may choose not to take the trip at all or switch to other species that are not commonly caught with striped bass.

Additionally, it is important to note that bait species are often part of the total catch caught on the same trip as striped bass (Table 5). For some states like Maine and New Hampshire, bait species comprise a majority of catch on trips that also caught striped bass. Anglers are likely targeting/catching bait to then use for targeting striped bass later in the trip. If that is the case, implementation of striped bass seasonal closures may impact the catch of bait species as well during the closure period.

Table 5. Breakdown of 2021-2024 total catch by species type on trips that caught striped bass.

	% Striped Bass	% Other Non-Bait Species	% Bait Species
ME	43.4	3.2	53.3
NH	45.7	6.5	47.9
MA	57.1	15.5	27.5
RI	61.1	37.1	1.7
CT	57.5	32.4	10.1
NY	54.8	37.0	8.2
NJ	75.5	20.9	3.7
DE	43.0	55.1	1.9
MD Ocean	83.5	13.5	3.0
VA Ocean	24.2	75.8	0.0
MD Ches. Bay	42.6	49.8	7.6
VA Ches. Bay	34.9	58.4	6.7

MRIP data from 2021 through 2024 for both the ocean fishery and Chesapeake Bay fishery were compiled by state and by wave to explore *a)* the top ten species reported as either primary or secondary targets on trips that also targeted striped bass, and *b)* the top ten species caught on trips that also caught striped bass. State-specific figures and a summary by region are available in Appendix E.

2.2.9 Examples of Recent Recreational Seasonal Closures: Maryland and North Carolina

Striped bass seasonal closures have recently been implemented in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay and North Carolina's Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River. While the specific impacts of these closures may not be directly comparable to new closures considered in this addendum, particularly for the Ocean, these closures provide insight into changes in effort and angler behavior. Several factors, including angler preferences (harvest or catch-and-release fishing), accessibility of fishing areas, and availability of other species, will contribute to any changes in catch and effort from a closure.

In Maryland Chesapeake Bay, as part of Maryland's conservation equivalency program for Addendum VI to Amendment 6, striped bass no targeting closures were implemented starting in 2020 for April 1-30 (half of wave 2 (Mar-Apr)) and for 16 days during wave 4 (Jul-Aug). In 2020, the wave 4 (Jul-Aug) closure was August 16 through August 31, and from 2021 onward, the closure has been July 16 through July 31. In addition to these closures, Maryland implemented other recreational management changes at the same time, including a shortened trophy season (May 1 start date) and reduced bag limit for private boat and shore anglers (2 fish to 1 fish). The charter bag limit stayed at 2 fish for charter boat anglers if the charter boat was enrolled in the charter electronic reporting system.

MDDNR reviewed MRIP data for striped bass directed trips, harvest, and live releases in inland waters to compare effort and removals in wave 2 (Mar-Apr) and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) for the five years prior to the no targeting closures (2015-2019) to the four years since the no targeting closures were implemented (2020-2023). There was a decrease in directed fishing effort for striped bass in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay during those waves in the years since the closures were implemented. During wave 2 (Mar-Apr) when the month of April was closed to targeting, MRIP indicates a 67% decrease in striped bass directed trips in wave 2 (Mar-Apr) across all modes in the years since the closure was implemented. During wave 4 (Jul-Aug) when the summer season was closed to targeting for two weeks, MRIP indicates a 24% decrease in striped bass directed trips in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) across all modes in the years since the closure was implemented. An additional review of for-hire data collected by MDDNR through the FACTS reporting program indicates total for-hire trips decreased by 74% during the summer closure relative to the two weeks prior to the closure.

Harvest, live releases and total removals estimates also declined after Maryland's no targeting closures were implemented, particularly for private boat and shore modes. It is important to note that other factors (e.g., fish availability, year-class strength, and the private angler trip limit changing from 2 fish to 1 fish) are also contributing to these results. To reduce the effects

of changing fish availability and year class strength, the proportions of directed trips, harvest, and live releases by wave were explored and also showed a decrease in directed fishing effort, harvest, and live releases after the no targeting closures were implemented. Further, the realized reductions from the closures met or exceeded the predicted reductions. Anglers reported targeting other Bay species more heavily during the closures, such as white perch, spot, and bluefish during the summer closure, as compared to prior to the closures when striped bass was the most targeted species.

In North Carolina, as part of the State's management of the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River (A-R) striped bass stock, the recreational season has been shortened in recent years as a result of poor stock status. Most recently, a harvest moratorium was implemented in 2024. The most recent A-R stock assessment, the 2022 Stock Assessment Update (Lee et al. 2022), indicated the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring along with very low juvenile recruitment for several consecutive years.

In response, North Carolina implemented multiple management changes including reducing the total allowable landings (TAL), implementing a slot limit, reducing creel limits, new gear restrictions, and shortening seasons. Over the past few years, the Roanoke River Management Area (RRMA) striped bass recreational season has changed from a two-month harvest season to fourteen days in 2021 (seven days in two separate zones), four days in 2022, and six days in 2023. The Albemarle Sound Management Area (ASMA) striped bass recreational harvest season closed earlier each year as the quota decreased and was reached sooner. In 2024, a harvest moratorium for the commercial and recreational sectors in both management areas was implemented.

Since harvest restrictions shortening the recreational season have been implemented in the RRMA, effort during the traditional harvest period (March-April) has decreased. In the Upper Roanoke River, where there are few other species to target besides striped bass, effort decreased approximately 50% when the harvest season was shortened and decreased by another 50% with the full moratorium in 2024 (NCWRC unpublished data). Estimated number of angler trips targeting striped bass during March and April in the upper river averaged approximately 10,000 anglers from 2015 through 2020 but dropped to approximately 5,000 anglers in 2021 through 2023 and 2,300 anglers in 2024. Anglers participating in the Upper River fishery were assumed to be participating with the intent of harvesting a striped bass, not just catch-and-release.

In the Lower Roanoke River, although other species are available like catfish, white perch, sunfish, shad, or largemouth bass, striped bass targeted effort decreased more sharply than in the upper river when the season was shortened and there was minimal effort in 2024 with the moratorium. Lower river anglers targeting striped bass averaged approximately 12,000 trips per year from 2015-2020, but that effort decreased when the seasons were shortened (4,852 in 2021, 2,604 in 2022, and 3,110 trips in 2023). In 2024, only 244 targeted striped bass trips were estimated in the lower Roanoke River due to the harvest moratorium.

Effort during May, which is the typical catch-and-release season, on the upper Roanoke River has not shown the same decreases, likely in part due to different anglers participating in the different fisheries. Additionally, the number of guided trips has persisted due to the popularity of the catch-and-release fishery. The decrease in effort, along with a reduction in the daily creel limit from two fish to one fish, in the RRMA markedly decreased the number of striped bass landed in 2021-2023 (NCDMF 2024). However, the trend in the number of striped bass released in the RRMA remained similar to years with unrestricted seasons and is more related to availability and year class strength rather than effort.

In the ASMA, trip level effort during the traditional recreational harvest period (October through April) remains variable with the recent season restrictions. Like the RRMA, the number of for-hire trip intercepts in the ASMA has remained consistent as well as shore mode fishing; however, private boat intercepts have decreased approximately 30% from 2020-2021, 36% from 2021-2022, and 15% from 2022-2023 (NCDMF unpublished data). There was a decrease in the number of trips in 2023, but not to the same magnitude as the decrease in RRMA effort. However, even with the decrease in trips, the annual angler hour effort has not decreased. ASMA effort has historically varied year-to-year depending on striped bass abundance and year-class strength, and on the availability of other species like red drum and spotted sea trout. In general, there is a wider variety of species available in the Albemarle Sound than in the Roanoke River. However, if there is a combination of striped bass closures and low availability of other species in a particular year, that could contribute to lower effort and anglers may choose to fish somewhere else.

3.0 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

This document proposes management changes for the ocean and Chesapeake Bay fisheries. The striped bass ocean fishery (also referred to as “ocean region”) is defined as all fisheries operating in coastal and estuarine areas of the U.S. Atlantic coast from Maine through North Carolina, excluding the Chesapeake Bay and Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River (A-R) management areas. The Chesapeake Bay fishery is defined as all fisheries operating within Chesapeake Bay. This document does not propose changes to the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River fisheries, which are managed separately by the State of North Carolina.

When the Board takes final action on the addendum, there is the opportunity to select any measure within the range of options that went out for public comment, including combining options across issues.

Since the stock is currently overfished, conservation equivalency (CE) programs will not be approved for non-quota managed recreational fisheries, with the exception of the Hudson River, Delaware River, and Delaware Bay recreational fisheries. The Board has discretion whether to approve CE programs for quota-managed fisheries.

3.1 Method to Measure Total Length of a Striped Bass

The Atlantic Striped Bass FMP has specified size limits in total length (TL) since the original FMP's approval in 1981 but does not define a specific method for measuring TL for regulatory compliance. This has resulted in inconsistent state regulations and is of developing interest since the adoption of mandatory maximum size limits in the recreational striped bass fishery. Some states require squeezing the upper and lower fork of the tail, some states allow angler discretion on whether to squeeze the tail, and some states require the tail be left natural or fanned out. The total length measurement that is obtained from a striped bass differs among these three orientations of the tail (i.e., squeezed, left natural, or forcibly fanned out), whereby pinching the tail makes the fish longer and fanning the tail makes the fish shorter compared to the natural length.

A recent analysis by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to quantify the relationship between these different measurements indicated that while there is a minor difference between a natural and pinched tail measurement (estimated 0.29"), there is a more substantial difference between a natural and forcibly fanned tail measurement which also depends on fish size (e.g., a 32.38" fish measures 31" when the tail is forcibly fanned, difference of 1.38"; Appendix C.). Consequently, loosely defined methods of TL measurement or where anglers have discretion on whether to forcefully fan the tail to make the fish shorter can effectively allow harvest of striped bass that are over the maximum size limit. This undermines the intended conservation of the management measure. Additionally, the differences among the states' definitions of TL mean that some striped bass which must be released in certain states would be allowed to be retained in other states, which is contrary to the intended consistency of a coastwide size limit.

Further review of the states' regulatory definition of total length for striped bass demonstrated several other inconsistencies that may be of interest to address. First, not all states establish that the length measurement be taken as a straight line (as opposed to over the curve of the fish' body). Second, some states specify that the fish needs to be laid on its side and/or laid as flat as possible. Third, not all states specify that the mouth of the fish must be closed.

The Law Enforcement Committee supports consistent, specific, and easily understood language on how to measure striped bass TL, which would be especially beneficial in shared waterbodies where anglers may be fishing in multiple states' waters. Although standardizing the method of measuring TL would greatly improve consistency for regulatory compliance, there could be continued inconsistencies. For example, the rack of a fillet fish may measure slightly differently than the whole fish would have using the same method of measurement. The Law Enforcement Committee noted that filleted racks would be measured in the same manner as a whole fish. Additionally, the measurement may be inconsistent between types of measuring devices (i.e., using a measuring board vs. a measuring tape).

Option A. Status Quo: No Definition of Total Length

No requirement in the Interstate FMP for Atlantic Striped Bass related to the method of measuring total length of a striped bass.

Option B. Mandatory Elements for Total Length Definition

This option would adopt mandatory elements for each state's regulatory definition of striped bass total length measurement for compliance with size limits. All states must require: 1) squeezing the tail; 2) a straight-line measurement; 3) the fish is laid flat; and 4) the mouth is closed. This applies to both the commercial and recreational sectors. States may implement the following language or submit alternative language in their implementation plans for Board consideration.

Total length means the greatest straight line length in inches as measured on a fish (laid flat on its side on top of the measuring device) with its mouth closed from the anterior most tip of the jaw or snout to the farthest extremity of the tail with the upper and lower fork of the tail squeezed together.

3.2 Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of Sale vs. Point of Harvest

The Atlantic Striped Bass FMP's commercial tagging requirement has been in place since 2012 and allows states with commercial fisheries to choose whether to tag harvested fish at the point of harvest or the point of sale. Currently, three states implement tagging at the point of sale only: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and North Carolina.

There is concern that waiting to tag harvested fish until the point of sale increases the risk of illegal harvest. However, differences among states' commercial management systems and how each state manages its current tagging program (Table 6) make it difficult to determine whether requiring the same type of tag program across all states would decrease the risk of illegal harvest in every state. If harvesters or dealers do not return unused tags, all states with commercial tagging programs note the harvester or dealer is not able to receive the next season's tags or they receive a reduced number of tags until unused tags have been returned or a record of tag accounting/tag disposition has been submitted.

The majority opinion of the Law Enforcement Committee noted support for commercial tagging at the point of harvest to improve enforcement of possession from the total time the species is in possession, reduce the ability to high-grade, and increase accountability. Some LEC members noted the administrative burden of distributing tags to individual fishers, especially when a state's fishery is not managed with individual quotas. Concerns about sharing tags among fishers were also noted if tagging programs were required to switch to the point of harvest, and it should be considered whether trading tags could potentially outweigh (or even increase) an illegal market fish.

Table 6. State Tagging Program Key Characteristics

State	Tag at Point of Harvest or Sale	2024 Commercial Tags Issued	2024 Participants Receiving Tags	ITQ Fishery
MA	Sale	51,240	129	No
RI	Sale	9,980	18 plus Confidential # Floating Fish Trap	No
NY	Harvest	62,331	378	No [^]
DE	Both*	16,650	111	Yes
MD	Harvest	442,100	805	Yes
PRFC	Harvest	84,348	260	No ^{^^}
VA	Harvest	198,550	362	Yes
NC	Sale**	0	0	No

* DE number of tags listed are the tags issued to and used by harvesters. Tags are also issued to weigh stations where a second tag is attached to each striped bass, such that each fish has two tags.

** NC has reported 0 commercial striped bass harvest from the ocean in over a decade. No tags were issued or used. Tags are on hand to issue if fish come inside three miles.

[^]NY does not assign individuals a percentage of the quota like typical ITQ fisheries do, but each striped bass permit holder does receive a set number of tags in either a “full” or “part” share category.

^{^^} PRFC assigns a percentage of the quota to each gear type, and tags are distributed based on how many licenses are available for each gear type and the average fish weight for that gear.

Option A. Status Quo Point of Harvest or Point of Sale

States or jurisdictions with a commercial striped bass fishery may choose to implement their commercial tagging program at either the point of harvest or the point of sale.

Option B. Require Commercial Tagging at the Point of Harvest

States or jurisdictions with a commercial striped bass fishery must implement their commercial tagging program at the point of harvest.

For Board Consideration in May 2025: The FMP’s current commercial tagging requirements do not define “point of harvest” (i.e., immediately upon possession or within specific parameters outlined by various state regulations). At least one state currently specifies tagging at the point of landing (i.e., before landing or putting on shore) as compared to tagging at point of harvest due to safety concerns raised by industry. The Board should consider whether the intent of this option is to allow tagging at point of landing or just at point of harvest. The Board should be as specific as possible. For example, the Tautog FMP allows tagging at either point of harvest or point of landing and specifies: “All commercially caught tautog will be tagged by the commercially-permitted harvester at the time of harvest or prior to offloading.”

Note: If Option B is implemented for commercial tagging, the Board may consider delaying implementation of this measure until 2027 or 2028 to allow a delayed implementation plan to account for the extensive administrative and regulatory changes required for those states that currently implement point-of-sale tagging.

3.3 Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding

This issue proposes management changes for the ocean and Chesapeake Bay fisheries designed to reduce fishery removals to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock to the spawning stock biomass target by the 2029 deadline. Projection scenarios indicate a 1% and 7% reduction in 2026 total removals are required to achieve F_{rebuild} 50% and F_{rebuild} 60% in 2026, respectively. The options presented here include the 7% reduction required to achieve F_{rebuild} 60% in 2026.

It should be noted TC emphasizes that the outcome of management changes designed to achieve small changes (i.e., reductions or liberalizations 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).

For commercial fisheries, changes to the commercial quotas are considered. All options apply the percent reduction to the quotas in place in 2024. All commercial quotas are in pounds. No changes to commercial size limits are being considered; states must maintain commercial size limits in place in 2024.

For recreational fisheries, changes to the size limit and/or season are considered. All size limits are in total length. The number of days closed indicated in the options are new days closed (i.e., in addition to any days already closed during 2024). No changes to the recreational bag limit are being considered (1 fish per person per day for the ocean and Chesapeake Bay).

New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware may submit area-specific recreational measures to achieve the same percent reduction as the recreational sector in their area-specific fisheries listed below. These fisheries have historically targeted smaller fish to protect spawning females and/or due to availability of smaller resident fish with these fisheries occurring primarily over a two-month period:

- New York: the Hudson River management area.
- Pennsylvania: the state's April–May slot fishery in the lower Delaware River/Estuary.
- Delaware: the state's July–August slot fishery in Delaware River/Bay.

For seasonal closure options across ocean regions and Chesapeake Bay states, one of the primary tradeoffs to consider is whether to implement a shorter closure during peak striped bass season or implement a longer closure during the slower season. Another consideration is what type of closure to implement: a no-harvest closure or no-targeting closure. Angler response to a closure (e.g., target other species, do not go fishing) is difficult to predict, especially for a no-targeting closure. Two assumptions for how striped bass live releases would decrease are considered in the options. One assumption, referred to as 'SB Trips Switch Target' assumes that under a no-targeting closure, all trips that previously targeted striped bass would still occur but would shift to targeting other species where they release striped bass at a non-targeted rate (i.e., incidentally). The second assumption referred to as 'SB-only Trips Eliminated' assumes that during a no-targeting closure, trips only targeting striped bass (i.e., no other

species were targeted) would no longer occur or the trip would no longer encounter any striped bass. Trips that targeted striped bass with a second species would still release striped bass but at a non-targeted rate. For both assumptions, all striped bass releases from non-targeted trips would still occur. One factor to consider is alternative species. If few alternative species are available, that may contribute to a trip not occurring at all as compared to switching target species.

For recreational mode split options, all options result in differing size limits between the for-hire modes (FH = charter and head boat) and the private/shore modes (PS = private vessels and shore anglers). Some options result in differing seasons between FH and PS, while other options result in the same seasons for all modes. One tradeoff to consider is between equitability and enforceability. Options with different seasons by mode are based on all modes taking a longer closure to account for a different FH size limit. However, the Law Enforcement Committee noted the difficulty of enforcing differing seasons by mode due to requiring identification of the sector a vessel belongs to and verifying for-hire trips.

Percent standard error (PSE) values for harvest and live release estimates by region and by mode are available in Appendix B.

Option 1. Status Quo

The ocean commercial fisheries and Chesapeake Bay commercial fisheries will continue to be managed by their Addendum II quotas and size limits. Ocean recreational fisheries are constrained by a 1-fish bag limit and a slot limit of 28" to 31". Chesapeake Bay recreational fisheries are constrained by a 1-fish bag limit and a slot limit of 19" to 24". States are required to maintain the same recreational seasons that were in place in 2022. The Chesapeake Bay recreational spring trophy fisheries are managed by the same size and bag limits as the ocean fishery (1 fish at 28" to 31") with the 2022 trophy season dates.

Option 2: Even Sector Reductions: Commercial -7% and Recreational -7%

Under Option 2, commercial quotas would be reduced by 7%. Options O2A – O2E for the Ocean and Options CB2A – CB2G for the Chesapeake Bay in Table 7 specify recreational measures designed to achieve a 7% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Table 7. Recreational Measures for Even Sector Reductions Option 2. Ocean (O) and Chesapeake Bay (CB) recreational fisheries are constrained by a 1-fish bag limit. Each option achieves at least -7% recreational reduction.

Option 2 Ocean Recreational Fishery				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
O2A	All	37" to 40" slot [-7%]	Status Quo	NA
O2B	All	28" to 31" slot [0%]	-7%	Table 10
O2C	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 28" to 31" slot FH: 28" to 33" slot [+1%]	-8%	Table 11
O2D	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -7%	Table 13
		FH: 28" to 32" slot [+12%]	FH: -17%	Table 15
O2E	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -7%	Table 13
		FH: 28" to 33" slot [+28%]	FH: -27%	Table 15
Option 2 Chesapeake Bay Recreational Fishery				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
CB2A	All	20" to 24" slot [-8%]	Status Quo	NA
CB2B	All	22" minimum size [-10%]	Status Quo	NA
CB2C	All	19" to 24" slot [0%]	-7%	Table 10
CB2D	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 20" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 25" slot [-7%]	Status Quo	NA
CB2E	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 20" to 24" slot FH: 21" minimum size [-7%]	Status Quo	NA
CB2F	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 25" slot [+1%]	-8%	Table 11
CB2G	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 19" to 24" slot [0%]	PS: -7%	Table 13
		FH: 19" to 25" slot [+13%]	FH: -18%	Table 17

Option 3: No Commercial Reduction: Commercial -0% and Recreational -8%

Under Option 3, commercial quotas would not take a reduction. Options O3A – O3E for the Ocean and options CB3A – CB3F for the Chesapeake Bay in Table 8 specify recreational measures designed to achieve an 8% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Option 4: Reductions based on Sector Contribution to Total Removals: Commercial -0.8% and Recreational -8%

Under Option 4, commercial quotas would be reduced by 0.8%. Options O4A – O4E for the Ocean and options CB4A – CB4F for the Chesapeake Bay in Table 8 specify recreational measures designed to achieve an 8% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Table 8. Recreational Measures for No Commercial Reduction Option 3 and Reductions based on Sector Contribution to Total Removals Option 4. Ocean (O) and Chesapeake Bay (CB) recreational fisheries are constrained by a 1-fish bag limit. Each option achieves at least -8% recreational reduction.

Options 3/4 Ocean Fishery Recreational Fishery				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
O3A/O4A	All	38" to 41" slot [-8%]	Status Quo	NA
O3B/O4B	All	28" to 31" slot [0%]	-8%	Table 11
O3C/O4C	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 28" to 31" slot FH: 28" to 33" slot [+1%]	-9%	Table 12
O3D/O4D	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -8%	Table 14
		FH: 28" to 32" slot [+12%]	FH: -18%	Table 16
O3E/O4E	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -8%	Table 14
		FH: 28" to 33" slot [+28%]	FH: -28%	Table 16

Option 3/4 Chesapeake Bay Recreational Fishery				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
CB3A/CB4A	All Modes	20" to 24" slot [-8%]	Status Quo	NA
CB3B/CB4B	All Modes	22" minimum size [-10%]	Status Quo	NA
CB3C/CB4C	All Modes	19" to 24" slot [0%]	-8%	Table 11
CB3D/CB4D	Mode Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 20" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 24" slot [-8%]	Status Quo	NA
CB3E/CB4E	Mode Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 25" slot [+1%]	-9%	Table 12
CB3F/CB4F	Mode Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 19" to 24" slot [0%]	PS: -8%	Table 14
		FH: 19" to 25" slot [+13%]	FH: -19%	Table 17

Table 9. Commercial quotas (pounds of fish) for each option in the addendum. Status quo reflects current Addendum II commercial quotas.

State/Region	Options 1 & 3. Status Quo & No Reduction	Option 2. -7% Reduction	Option 4. -0.8% Reduction
Ocean Commercial Quotas			
Maine	143	133	142
New Hampshire	3,289	3,059	3,263
Massachusetts	683,773	635,909	678,303
Rhode Island	138,467	128,774	137,359
Connecticut	13,585	12,634	13,476
New York	595,868	554,157	591,101
New Jersey	200,798	186,742	199,192
Delaware	132,501	123,226	131,441
Maryland	82,857	77,057	82,194
Virginia	116,282	108,142	115,352
North Carolina	274,810	255,573	272,612
Ocean Total	2,242,373	2,085,407	2,224,434
Chesapeake Bay Commercial Quota			
Chesapeake Bay Total	2,791,532	2,596,125	2,769,200

Recreational Seasonal Closure Tables

Below are season closure tables accompanying recreational reduction options:

- Table 10: Closures for -7% reduction for all modes
- Table 11: Closures for -8% reduction for all modes
- Table 12: Closures for -9% reduction for all modes
- Table 13: Closures for -7% reduction for Private-Shore
- Table 14: Closures for -8% reduction for Private-Shore
- Table 15: Closures for -17% and 27% reductions for Ocean For-Hire
- Table 16: Closures for -18% and 28% reductions for Ocean For-Hire
- Table 17: Closures for -18% and -19% reduction for Chesapeake Bay For-Hire

Note in the Chesapeake Bay, PRFC and DC can each choose whether to implement their closure during the same wave as Maryland or the same wave as Virginia. Although complete alignment among the four Bay jurisdictions is difficult given the current differences in seasons, the Bay jurisdictions should coordinate to align seasons as much as possible. Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions should consider whether new closures could be added to existing closures and whether the type of existing closure (no-targeting vs. no-harvest) should be consistent in a wave.

All closures are in number of days. ^ indicates closing the entire wave will not achieve the reduction.

Table 10. Recreational season closures for -7% reduction for all modes.

Closures for -7% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	9	12	18
ME-MA	Wave 3	18	40	47
ME-MA	Wave 4	12	22	23
ME-MA	Wave 5	20	29	53
RI-NC	Wave 2	17	20	42
RI-NC	Wave 3	29	34	46
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	37	49	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	11	14	21
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	12	13	22
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	14	17	31
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	12	15	25
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	8	10	15
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	10	13	18

Closures for -7% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
ME-RI	Wave 3	16	30	44
ME-RI	Wave 4	13	23	25
ME-RI	Wave 5	20	28	52
CT-NC	Wave 2	17	19	40
CT-NC	Wave 3	31	37	48
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	39	54	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	10	14	20
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	11	13	22
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	14	17	31
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	12	14	25
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	8	10	14
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	9	12	18
MD Bay	Wave 3	17	21	23
MD Bay	Wave 4	17	19	21
MD Bay	Wave 5	19	21	27
MD Bay	Wave 6	14	14	22
VA Bay	Wave 3	10	10	12
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	9	10	13

Table 11. Recreational season closures for -8% reduction for all modes.

Closures for -8% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	11	14	21
ME-MA	Wave 3	20	46	54
ME-MA	Wave 4	14	26	27
ME-MA	Wave 5	23	34	61^

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Closures for -8% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
RI-NC	Wave 2	20	23	48
RI-NC	Wave 3	33	40	53
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	42	57	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	12	16	25
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	13	15	26
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	16	20	36
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	14	17	29
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	9	12	17
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	11	15	21
ME-RI	Wave 3	19	35	50
ME-RI	Wave 4	15	26	28
ME-RI	Wave 5	23	32	60
CT-NC	Wave 2	19	22	46
CT-NC	Wave 3	36	43	55
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	45	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	12	16	23
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	13	15	25
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	16	19	35
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	14	17	28
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	9	12	17
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	11	14	20
MD Bay	Wave 3	20	24	27
MD Bay	Wave 4	19	22	24
MD Bay	Wave 5	22	25	32
MD Bay	Wave 6	16	17	26
VA Bay	Wave 3	11	11	14
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	10	11	15

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table 12. Recreational season closures for -9% reduction for all modes.

Closures for -9% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	12	16	23
ME-MA	Wave 3	23	52	61 [^]
ME-MA	Wave 4	16	29	30
ME-MA	Wave 5	26	38	61 [^]
RI-NC	Wave 2	22	26	55
RI-NC	Wave 3	37	45	60
RI-NC	Wave 4	62 [^]	62 [^]	62 [^]
RI-NC	Wave 5	48	61 [^]	61 [^]
RI-NC	Wave 6	14	19	28
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	14	17	29
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	19	22	41
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	15	19	33
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	10	13	19
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	12	16	24
ME-RI	Wave 3	21	40	57
ME-RI	Wave 4	17	29	32
ME-RI	Wave 5	26	36	61 [^]
CT-NC	Wave 2	22	25	52
CT-NC	Wave 3	41	48	0
CT-NC	Wave 4	62 [^]	62 [^]	62 [^]
CT-NC	Wave 5	50	61 [^]	61 [^]
CT-NC	Wave 6	13	18	26
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	14	17	28
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	18	22	40
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	15	19	32
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	10	13	19
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	12	16	23
MD Bay	Wave 3	23	27	30
MD Bay	Wave 4	22	25	28
MD Bay	Wave 5	25	28	36
MD Bay	Wave 6	18	19	29

Closures for -9% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
VA Bay	Wave 3	13	13	16
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	11	12	17

Table 13. Recreational season closures for -7% reduction for private-shore (PS).

Closures for -7% Reduction for Private Shore				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	18	44	50
ME-MA	Wave 4	13	24	25
ME-MA	Wave 5	19	28	52
RI-NC	Wave 2	17	20	41
RI-NC	Wave 3	30	36	49
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	36	49	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	11	14	21
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
ME-RI	Wave 3	17	32	47
ME-RI	Wave 4	14	24	27
ME-RI	Wave 5	19	27	51
CT-NC	Wave 2	16	19	39
CT-NC	Wave 3	33	39	51
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	39	54	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	10	14	20

Closures for -7% Reduction for Private Shore				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
MD Bay	Wave 3	21	27	31
MD Bay	Wave 4	19	22	26
MD Bay	Wave 5	18	21	28
MD Bay	Wave 6	13	14	23
VA Bay	Wave 3	10	10	12
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	8	9	13

Table 14. Recreational season closures for -8% reduction for Private-Shore (PS).

Closures for -8% Reduction for Private Shore				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	21	51	57
ME-MA	Wave 4	15	28	29
ME-MA	Wave 5	22	33	60
RI-NC	Wave 2	19	23	47
RI-NC	Wave 3	34	41	57
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	42	57	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	12	16	25
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Closures for -8% Reduction for Private Shore				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
ME-RI	Wave 3	19	37	54
ME-RI	Wave 4	16	28	31
ME-RI	Wave 5	22	31	59
CT-NC	Wave 2	19	22	45
CT-NC	Wave 3	37	45	59
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	44	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	12	16	23
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
MD Bay	Wave 3	24	31	36
MD Bay	Wave 4	22	26	29
MD Bay	Wave 5	21	24	32
MD Bay	Wave 6	15	16	26
VA Bay	Wave 3	11	11	13
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	10	11	15

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table 15. Recreational season closures for -17% and -27% reduction for Ocean For-Hire.

Closures for -17% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	35	40	57
ME-MA	Wave 4	19	24	26
ME-MA	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
Closures for -17% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
RI-NC	Wave 3	33	36	39
RI-NC	Wave 4	50	53	58
RI-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	40	46	55
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
ME-RI	Wave 3	32	37	52
ME-RI	Wave 4	20	24	27
ME-RI	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 3	34	38	40
CT-NC	Wave 4	52	54	59
CT-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	38	44	51
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Closures for -27% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	55	61^	61^
ME-MA	Wave 4	31	38	41
ME-MA	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 3	53	58	61^
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	61^	61^	61^
Closures for -27% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
ME-RI	Wave 3	52	58	61^
ME-RI	Wave 4	31	39	43
ME-RI	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 3	55	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	61	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table 16. Recreational season closures for -18% and -28% reduction for Ocean For-Hire.

Closures for -18% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	37	42	60
ME-MA	Wave 4	20	25	27
ME-MA	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 3	35	38	41
RI-NC	Wave 4	53	56	62
RI-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	43	49	58
Closures for -18% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
ME-RI	Wave 3	34	39	55
ME-RI	Wave 4	21	26	28
ME-RI	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 3	37	40	42
CT-NC	Wave 4	55	58	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	40	47	54
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Closures for -28% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
ME-MA	Wave 3	57	61^	61^
ME-MA	Wave 4	32	39	43
ME-MA	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 3	54	60	61^
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	61^	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			
Closures for -28% Reduction for Ocean For-Hire				
ME-RI	Wave 3	54	61	61^
ME-RI	Wave 4	33	40	44
ME-RI	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 3	57	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	61^	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	Dual wave closures by mode will be calculated before the document is released for public comment.		
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4			
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5			
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6			
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6			

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table 17. Recreational season closures for -18% and -19% reduction for Chesapeake Bay For-Hire.

Closures for -18% Reduction for Chesapeake Bay For-Hire				
MD Bay	Wave 3	27	28	31
MD Bay	Wave 4	30	31	34
MD Bay	Wave 5	0	0	0
MD Bay	Wave 6	40^	40^	40^
VA Bay	Wave 3	31^	31^	31^
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	29	29	34
Closures for -19% Reduction for Chesapeake Bay For-Hire				
MD Bay	Wave 3	28	30	33
MD Bay	Wave 4	32	32	36
MD Bay	Wave 5	0	0	0
MD Bay	Wave 6	40^	40^	40^
VA Bay	Wave 3	31^	31^	31^
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	31	31	35

4.0 COMPLIANCE SCHEDULE

If approved, states must implement Addendum III according to the following schedule to be in compliance with the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate FMP:

[Month, Day, Year]: States submit implementation plans to meet Addendum III requirements.

[Month, Day, Year]: Board reviews and considers approving state implementation plans.

[Month Day, Year]: States implement regulations.

REFERENCES

- Carr-Harris, A. and S. Steinback. 2020. Expected economic and biological impacts of recreational Atlantic striped bass fishing policy. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6: 814, p.1-20.
- Haab, T.C. and McConnell, K.E. 2003. *Valuating Environmental and Natural Resources: The Econometrics of Non-Market Valuation*, Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Holzer, J. and K. McConnell. 2017. Risk Preferences and Compliance in Recreational Fisheries. *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists*, 4(S1):1-35.
- Lee, L.M., C.J.C. Schlick, N. Hancock, C.H. Godwin, and J. McCargo (editors). 2022. *Assessment of the Albemarle Sound-Roanoke River Striped Bass (Morone saxatilis) stock in North Carolina, 1991–2021*. North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, NCDMF SAP-SAR2022-03, Morehead City, North Carolina. 98 p.
- Lee, M., S.R. Steinback, and K. Wallmo. 2017. Applying a bioeconomic model to recreational fisheries management: Groundfish in the northeast United States. *Marine Resource Economics* 32 (2): 191–216.
- McConnell, K.E. and Strand, I.E. and Blake-Hedges, L. 1995. Random Utility Models of Recreational Fishing: Catching Fish Using a Poisson Process. *Marine Resource Economics* 10, p.247-261.
- Murphy Jr., R., S. Scyphers, S. Gray, J.H. Grabowski. 2019. Angler attitudes explain disparate behavioral reactions to fishery regulations. *Fisheries* 44 (10): 475-487.
- NCDMF. 2024. 2023 Fishery Management Plan Review. North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, Morehead City, NC. p. 65-114.

FIGURES

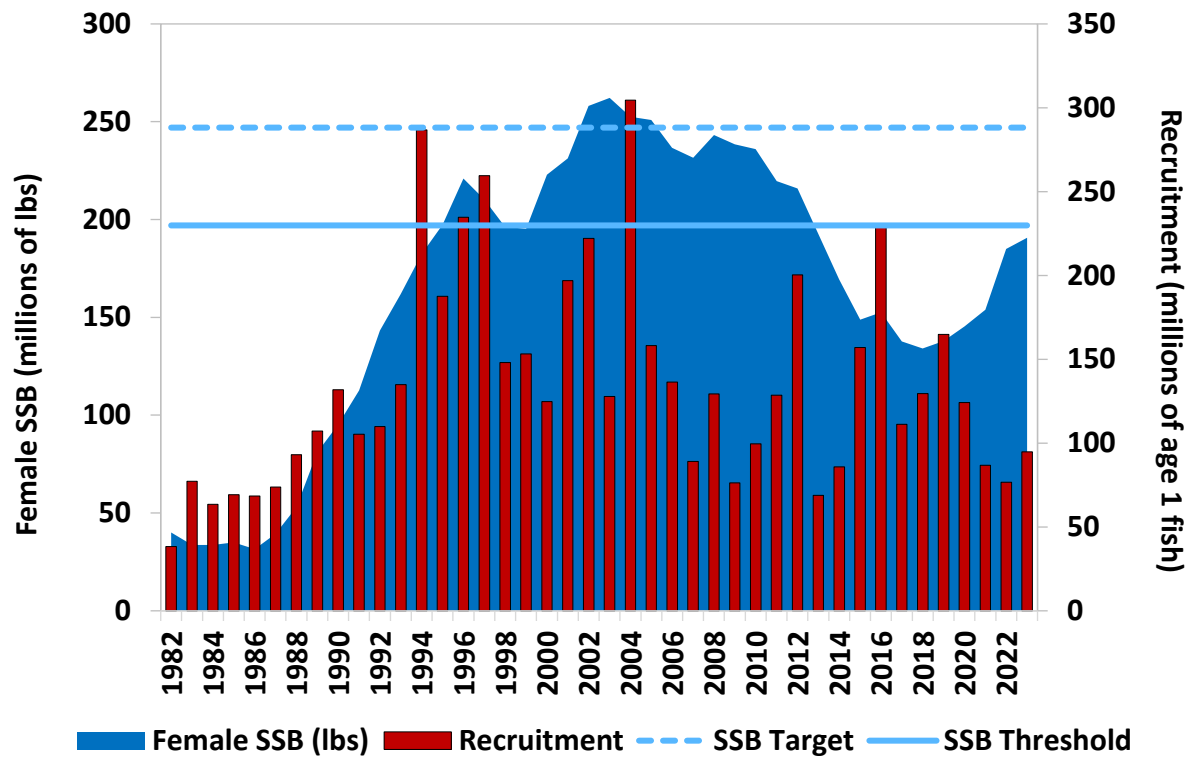


Figure 1. Atlantic striped bass female spawning stock biomass and recruitment, 1982-2023. Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update.

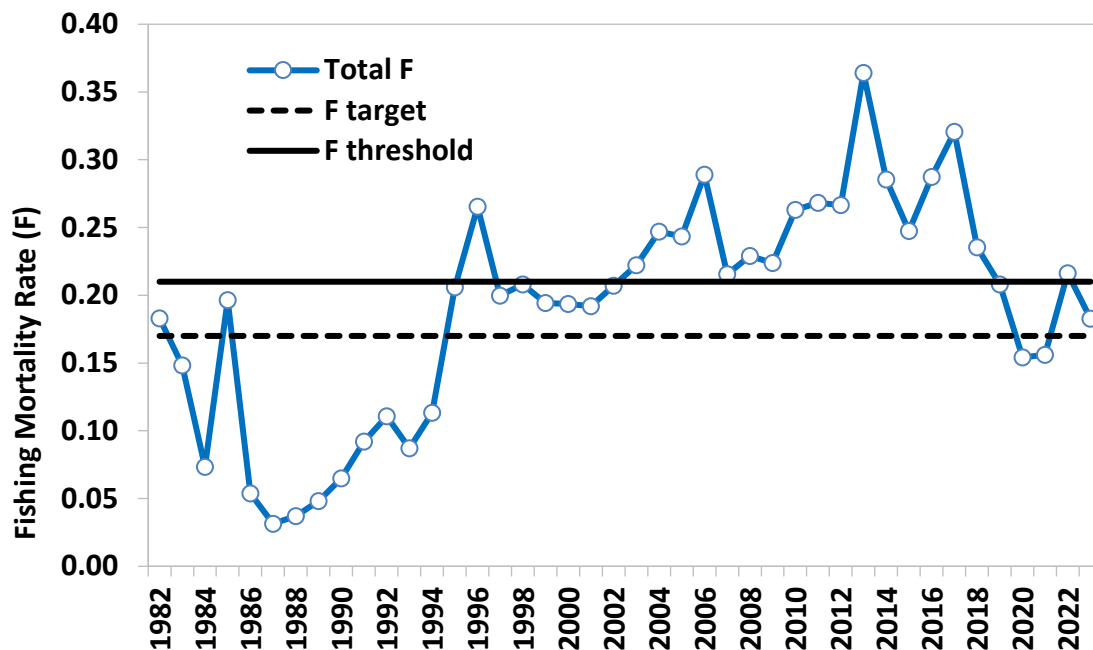


Figure 2. Atlantic striped bass fishing mortality, 1982-2023. Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update.

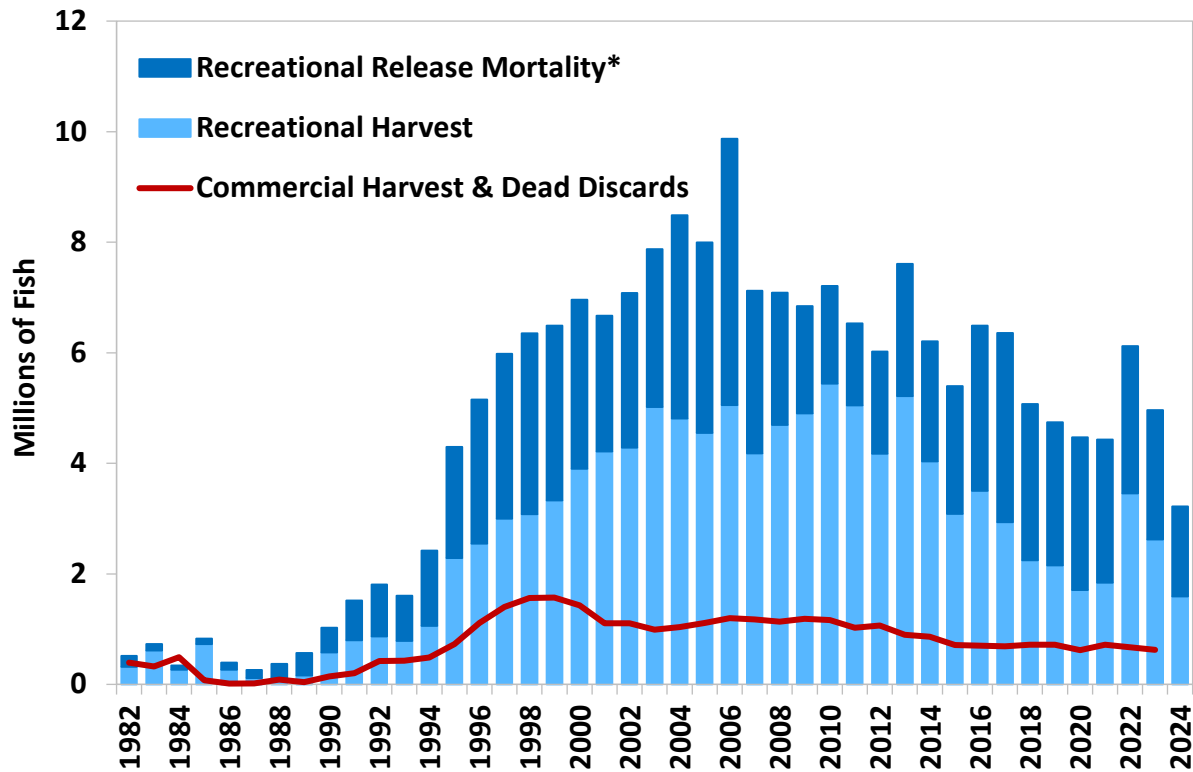


Figure 3. Atlantic striped bass commercial landings and dead discards and recreational landings and release mortality from 1982-2024 (commercial data for 2024 not yet available). * 9% of fish released alive assumed to die because of being caught. Source: 2024 Stock Assessment Update.

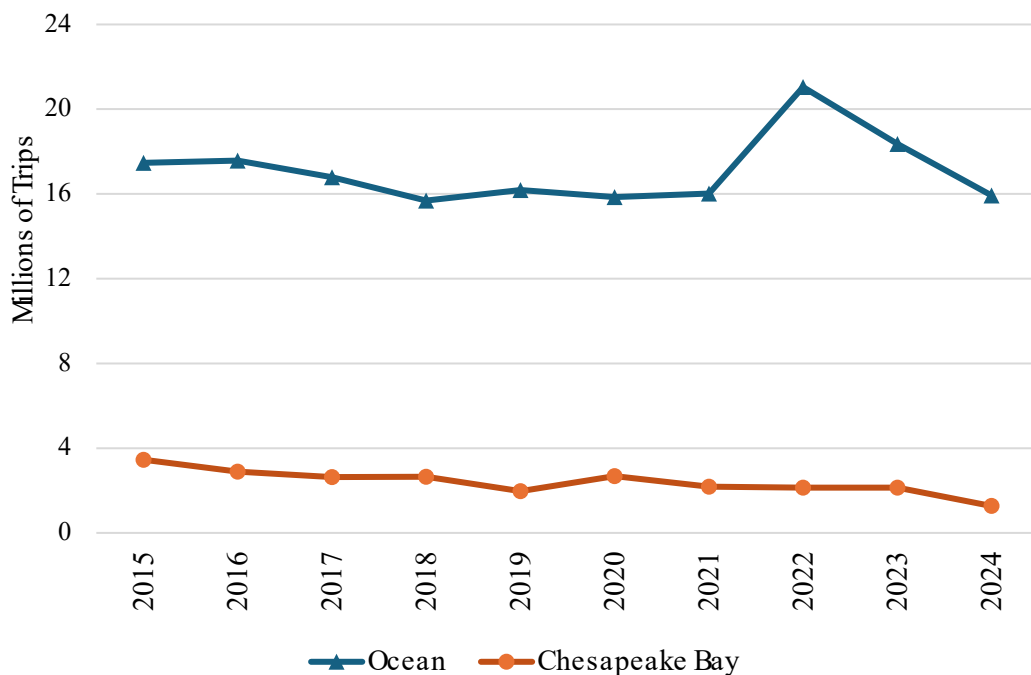


Figure 4. Number of striped bass directed trips (primary or secondary target) for the ocean in blue and Chesapeake Bay in orange from 2015-2024. Source: MRIP.

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

■ Harvest ■ Live Releases

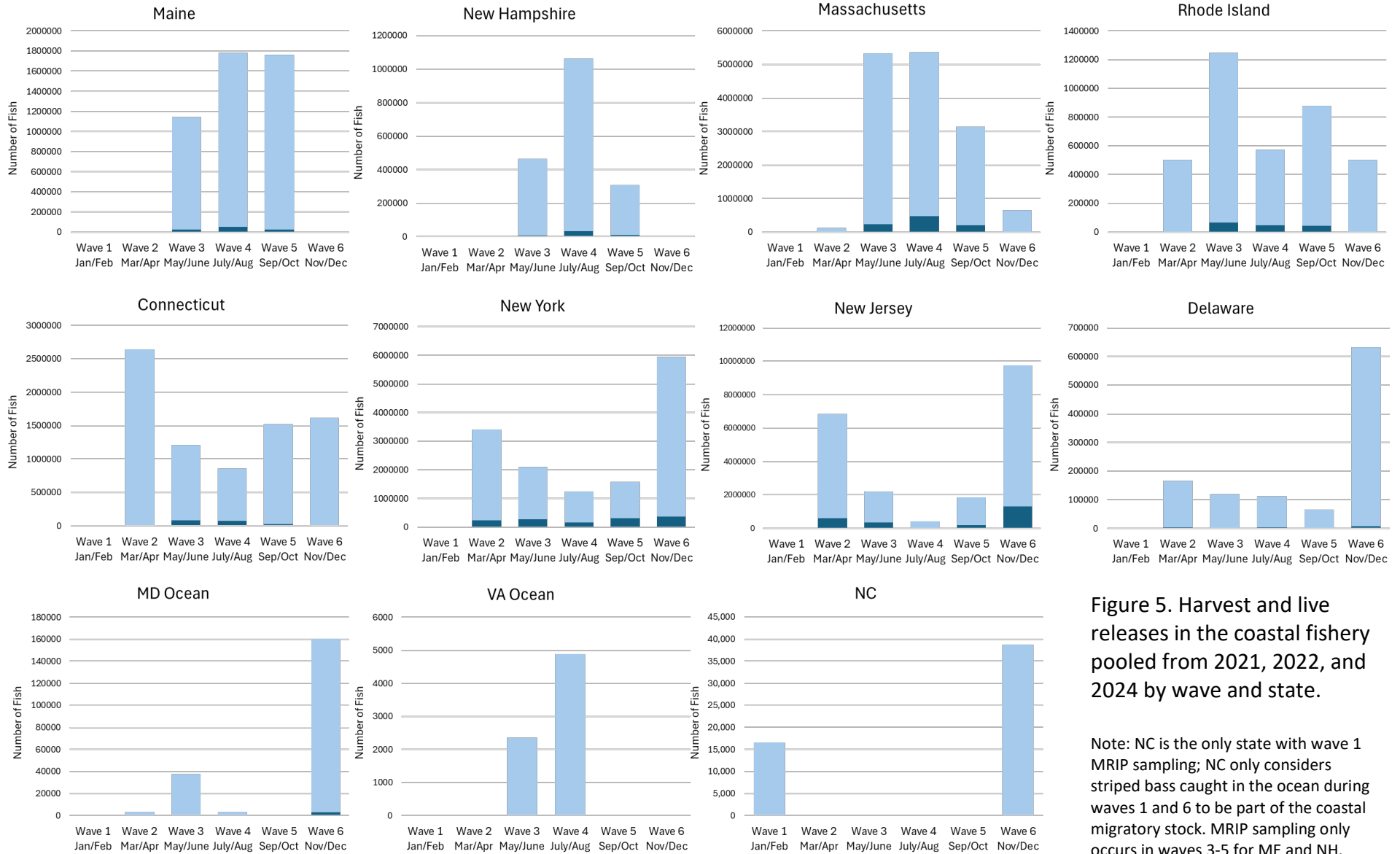


Figure 5. Harvest and live releases in the coastal fishery pooled from 2021, 2022, and 2024 by wave and state.

Note: NC is the only state with wave 1 MRIP sampling; NC only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal migratory stock. MRIP sampling only occurs in waves 3-5 for ME and NH.

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

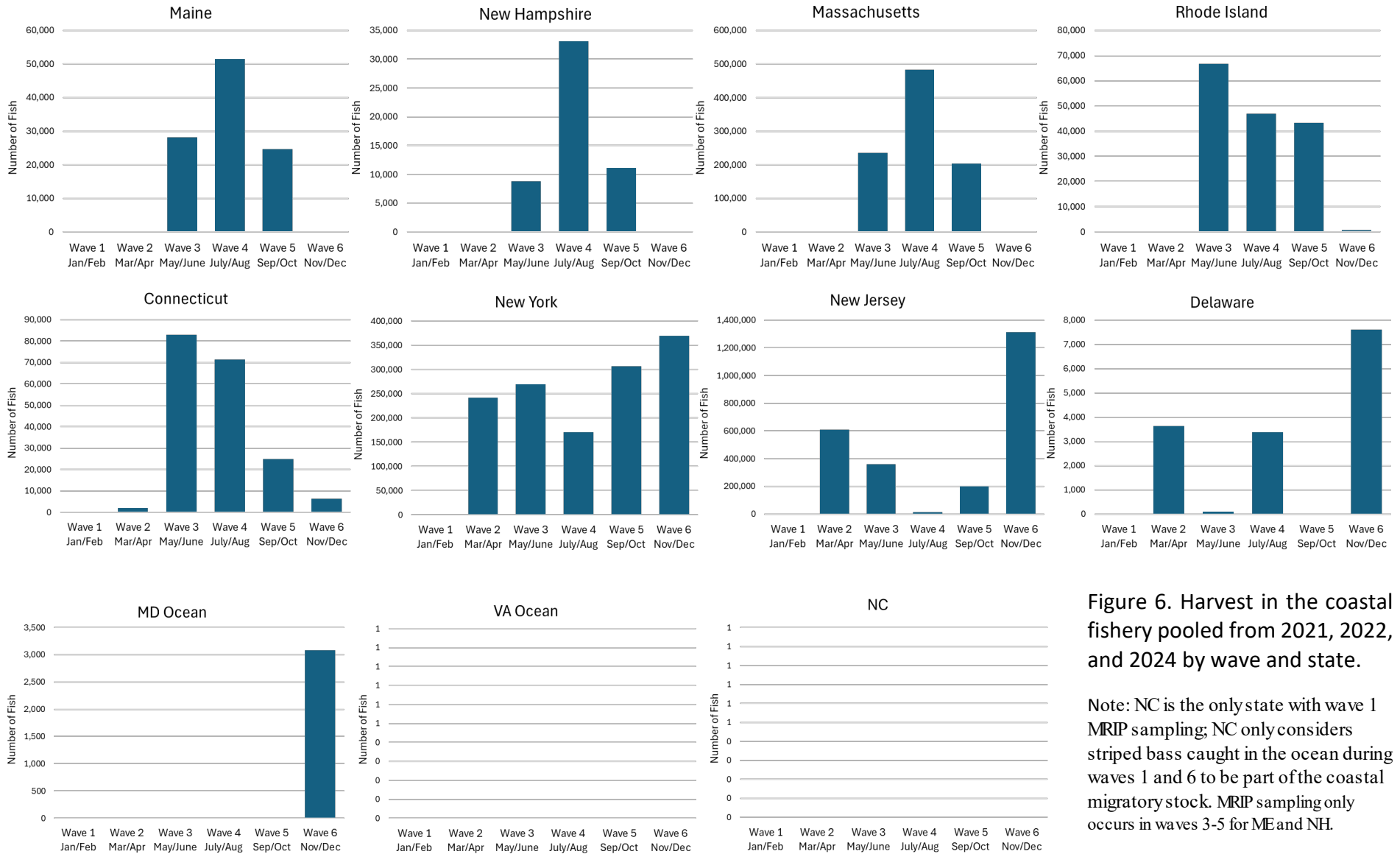


Figure 6. Harvest in the coastal fishery pooled from 2021, 2022, and 2024 by wave and state.

Note: NC is the only state with wave 1 MRIP sampling; NC only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal migratory stock. MRIP sampling only occurs in waves 3-5 for ME and NH.

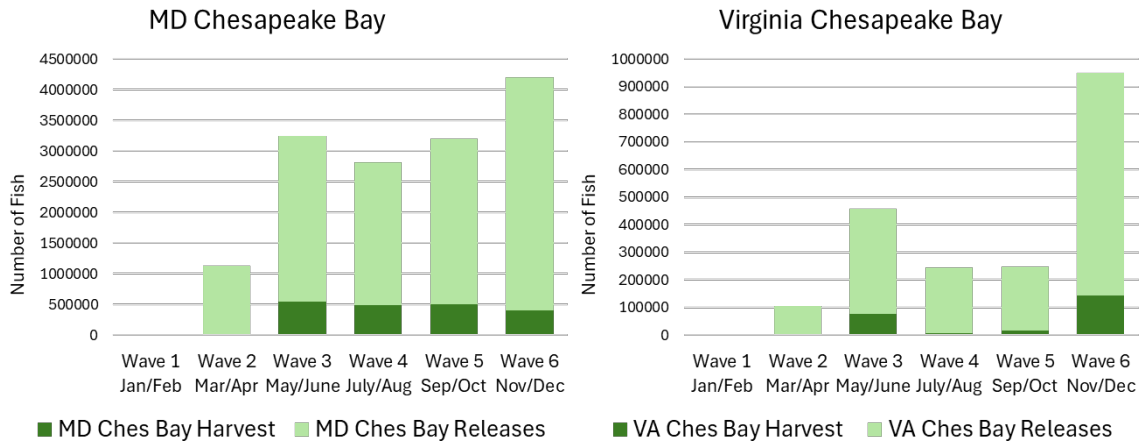


Figure 7. Harvest and live releases in the Chesapeake Bay pooled from 2021-2024 by wave and state. Source: MRIP.

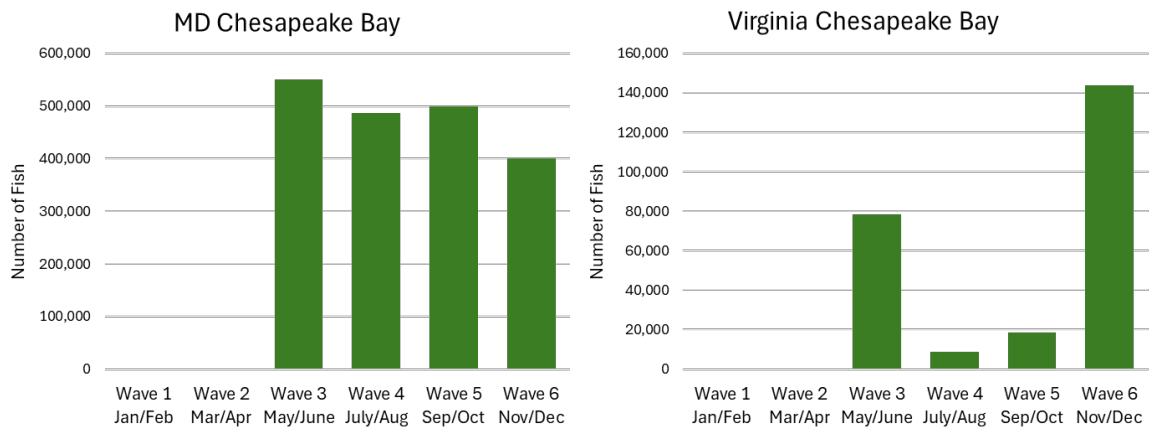


Figure 8. Harvest in the Chesapeake Bay pooled from 2021-2024 by wave and state. Source: MRIP

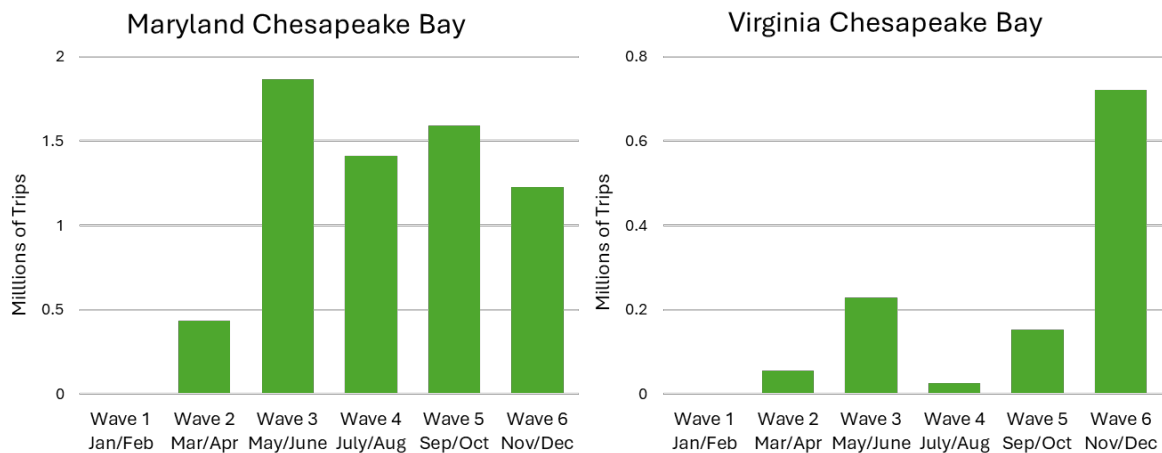


Figure 9. Striped bass directed trips in the Chesapeake Bay pooled from 2021-2024 by wave and state. Source: MRIP

Appendix A.
2024 Management Measures by State

Table A1. Summary of Atlantic striped bass **commercial** measures under Addendum II to Amendment 7 as of May 1, 2024. State implementation plans were approved in March 2024 and May 2024. Please refer to each state’s regulations for additional details.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL) and TRIP LIMITS	ADDENDUM II QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
ME	Commercial fishing prohibited		
NH	Commercial fishing prohibited		
MA	35” minimum size; no gaffing undersized fish. 15 fish/day with commercial boat permit; 2 fish/day with rod and reel permit.	683,773 lbs. Hook & Line only.	6.18-9.30 (or when quota reached); open fishing days of Tuesday and Wednesday, with Thursday added on August 1 if >30% quota remains. Cape Cod Canal closed to commercial striped bass fishing.
RI	Floating fish trap: 26” minimum size unlimited possession limit until 80% of quota reached, then 500 lbs. per licensee per day	Total: 138,467 lbs., split 39:61 between the trap and general category. Gill netting prohibited.	4.1 – 12.31
	General category (mostly rod & reel): 34” min. Five (5) fish per person per calendar day, or if fishing from a vessel, five (5) fish per vessel per calendar day.		6.11-6.20; 7.9-12.31, or until quota reached. Closed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout.
CT	Commercial fishing prohibited; bonus program in CT suspended indefinitely in 2020.		
NY	26”-38” size; (Hudson River closed to commercial harvest)	595,868 lbs. Pound Nets, Gill Nets (6-8”stretched mesh), Hook & Line.	5.15 – 12.15, or until quota reached. Limited entry permit only.
NJ	Commercial fishing prohibited; bonus program: 1 fish/permit at 24” to <28”	200,798 lbs.	5.15 – 12.31 (permit required)

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL) and TRIP LIMITS	ADDENDUM II QUOTA	OPEN SEASON
PA	Commercial fishing prohibited		
DE	Gill Net: 20" min in DE Bay/River during spring season. 28" in all other waters/seasons.	Gillnet: 132,501 lbs. Split between gill net and hook and line. No fixed nets in DE River.	Gillnet: 2.15-5.31 (2.15-3.30 for Nanticoke River) & 11.15-12.31; drift nets only 2.15-28 & 5.1-31; no trip limit.
	Hook and Line: 28" min		Hook and Line: 4.1-12.31, 200 lbs./day trip limit
MD	Chesapeake Bay and Rivers: 18-36" Common pool trip limits: Hook and Line - 250 lbs./license/week Gill Net - 300 lbs./license/week	1,344,216 lbs. (part of Bay-wide quota)	Bay Pound Net: 6.1-12.31 Bay Haul Seine: 1.1-2.28; 6.1-12.31 Bay Hook & Line: 6.1-12.31 Bay Drift Gill Net: 1.1-2.28, 12.1-12.31
	Ocean: 24" minimum	Ocean: 82,857 lbs.	1.1-5.31, 10.1-12.31
PRFC	18" min all year; 36" max 2.15-3.25	532,761 lbs. (split between gear types; part of Bay-wide quota)	Hook & Line: 1.1-3.25, 6.1-12.31 Pound Net & Other: 2.15-3.25, 6.1-12.15 <u>Gill Net</u> : 11.9.2021-3.25.2022 Misc. Gear: 2.15-3.25, 6.1-12.15
VA	Chesapeake Bay and Rivers: 18" min; 28" max size limit 3.15-6.15	914,555 lbs. (part of Bay-wide quota)	1.16-12.31
	Ocean: 28" min	116,282 lbs.	
NC	Ocean: 28" min	274,810 lbs. (split between gear types)	Seine fishery was not opened Gill net fishery was not opened Trawl fishery was not opened

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

Table A2. Summary of Atlantic striped bass **recreational** size limits, bag limits, and seasons under Addendum II to Amendment 7 as of May 1, 2024. State implementation plans were approved in March 2024 and May 2024. Please refer to each state's regulations for gear/fishing restrictions in that state.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL)/REGION	BAG LIMIT	OPEN SEASON
ME	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year, except spawning areas are closed 12.1-4.30 and C&R only 5.1-6.30
NH	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
MA	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
RI	28" to <31"	1 fish/day	All year
CT	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year
NY	Ocean and Delaware River: 28" to 31"	1 fish/day	Ocean: 4.15-12.15 Delaware River: All year
	Hudson River: 23" to 28"	1 fish/day	Hudson River: 4.1-11.30
NJ	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	Closed 1.1 – Feb 28 in all waters except in the Atlantic Ocean, and closed 4.1-5.31 in the lower DE River and tribs
PA	Upstream from Calhoun St Bridge: 28" to <31", 1 fish/day		All year
	Downstream from Calhoun St Bridge: 28" to <31", 1 fish/day* *except from 4.1-5.31: 22" to <26", 1 fish/day		All year. 1 fish/day at 22" to <26" slot from 4.1-5.31

Draft Document for Board Review. Not for Public Comment.

STATE	SIZE LIMITS (TL)/REGION	BAG LIMIT	OPEN SEASON
DE	28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year. C&R only 4.1-5.31 in spawning grounds. 20" to 24" slot from 7.1-8.31 in DE River, Bay & tributaries
MD	Ocean: 28" to 31"	1 fish/day	All year
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs^	C&R only	1.1-2.28, 3.1-3.31, 12.11-12.31
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs^	No targeting	4.1-5.31, 7.16-7.31
	Chesapeake Bay: 19" to 24" 1 fish/day^		5.16-5.31
	Chesapeake Bay and tribs: 19" to 24", 1 fish/day^		6.1-7.15, 8.1-12.10
PRFC	Summer/Fall: 19" to 24"		1 fish/day
DC	19" to 24"		1 fish/day
VA	Ocean: 28" to 31"		1 fish/day
	Bay Spring/Summer/Fall: 19" to 24"		1 fish/day
NC	Ocean: 28" to 31"		1 fish/day

^ MD Susquehanna Flats: C&R only 1.1-3.31 and 12.11-12.31; No targeting 4.1-5.31; 1 fish at 19"-24" slot 6.1-7.15 and 8.1-12.10; No targeting 7.16-7.31

Appendix B.**Percent Standard Error (PSE) for Seasonal Closure Options**

Percent standard error (PSE) for MRIP estimates of striped bass harvest and live releases pooled across states, modes, and years (2021-2022-2024 for ocean; 2021-2022-2023-2024 for Chesapeake Bay). Data pooled using methodology provided by MRIP in 2024. PSEs shaded based on MRIP's guidance: MRIP cautions use of the estimate in fisheries management when the PSE is over 30 (yellow) and does not support use of the estimate when the PSE exceeds 50 (red). PSE 30 or below is green. The higher an estimate's Percent Standard Error, or PSE, the larger the margin of error and uncertainty around the estimate.

Region	Mode	Harvest					Live Releases				
		2	3	4	5	6	2	3	4	5	6
ME-MA	All Modes		12	10.4	17.9	103.8	63.3	9.2	8.7	10.6	68.7
	For-Hire		19.2	13.9	25.2			15.4	13.5	21.8	
	Private/Shore		13.3	11.7	18.4	103.8	63.3	9.4	9	10.7	68.7
ME-RI	All Modes		10.3	9.7	16.2	79.1	54.3	8.2	8.2	9.6	41.8
	For-Hire		16.5	13.2	22.4			14.5	13	19.9	65.2
	Private/Shore		11.5	10.9	16.6	79.1	54.3	8.5	8.5	9.7	41.8
RI-NJ	All Modes	18.1	13	13.7	18.9	12.8	17	9	12.8	11.9	15.7
	For-Hire	30.5	11.8	13.4	18.9	9.9	25.9	13.2	13.2	26.8	12.8
	Private/Shore	18.2	14.3	16.1	19.4	13.2	17	9.3	13.4	12.2	15.8
RI-VA	All Modes	18	13	13.6	18.9	12.8	16.8	8.8	12.4	11.7	15.1
	For-Hire	30.5	11.8	13.4	18.9	9.9	25.9	13.2	13.2	26.8	12.8
	Private/Shore	18.1	14.3	15.9	19.4	13.2	16.8	9.1	12.9	12.1	15.2
CT-NJ	All Modes	18.1	14.2	15.8	20.2	12.8	17.3	10.4	15.1	13.4	16.1
	For-Hire	30.5	12.8	14.4	20.3	9.9	25.9	14.1	14	27.6	12.8
	Private/Shore	18.2	15.6	18.9	20.7	13.2	17.3	10.7	15.9	13.9	16.3
CT-VA	All Modes	18	14.2	15.6	20.2	12.8	17.1	10.1	14.5	13.2	15.5
	For-Hire	30.5	12.8	14.4	20.3	9.9	25.9	14.1	14	27.6	12.8
	Private/Shore	18.1	15.6	18.7	20.7	13.2	17.1	10.4	15.2	13.7	15.6
DE-VA	All Modes	50.8	102.9	61.8		66.7	20.6	21.4	35.3	28.7	38.8
	For-Hire			107.2				108.8	107.6		
	Private/Shore	50.8	102.9	61.8		66.7	20.6	21.4	35.3	28.7	38.8
CB-MD	All Modes		11.7	14.1	17.5	14.4	21.5	15.1	18.5	15	23.2
	For-Hire		12.4	13	17.1	22.3	71.3	15.9	16.6	22.6	27.2
	Private/Shore		17.8	20.3	21.6	17.4	21.6	16.1	19.5	15.4	24
CB-VA	All Modes		30.7	74.7	41	32.4	60	33.4	43	29.8	26.7
	For-Hire		93	119.4	31.7	26.6		93	64.8	34.8	34.3
	Private/Shore		31.1	94.6	43.6	33.7	60	34.6	45.4	33.1	26.8



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | www.mass.gov/marinefisheries



MAURA T. HEALEY
Governor

KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
Lt. Governor

REBECCA L. TEPPER
Secretary

THOMAS K. O'SHEA
Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

Appendix C.

Striped Bass Total Length Measurement Analysis

Ben Gahagan, Recreational Fisheries Program Leader
December 2024

To examine the implications of Massachusetts' current striped bass total length measurement definition—specifically, that anglers have discretion to either squeeze or leave fanned the upper and lower fork of the tail to measure the tail extremity—DMF biologists made a series of measurements on live and dead bass in the fall of 2024. During the annual USFWS striped bass tagging effort off Cape Cod, Recreational Fisheries Program staff took measurements from 413 striped bass with the tail naturally fanned (i.e., the tail was not manipulated to increase spread) and with the tail pinched. Age and Growth Project staff took measurements from 80 striped bass that were collected in the Recreational Rack data collection program. With these striped bass, measurements were made with the tail spread to the greatest extent possible and pinched. All measurements were rounded to the nearest 0.5 cm and then converted to inches.

The collected data were analyzed to create relationships between the three length types (pinched, natural fan, and forced fan) so that pinched lengths and predicted lengths for natural and forced fanning could be used to evaluate the potential increase in harvestable size due to current measurement regulations. Relative to a natural fanned length, pinching slightly increased the measured length while forcing the fan produced a larger decrease in measured length. Additionally, the increase in pinched length was almost constant as fish size increased while the decrease from forcing the caudal apart grew larger with fish size. Taken in combination, the ability to pinch or forcefully fan the caudal fin expands the current three-inch slot limit, relative to a natural fanned-length, by at least 1.67" (27.71" – 32.38"; Figure C1).

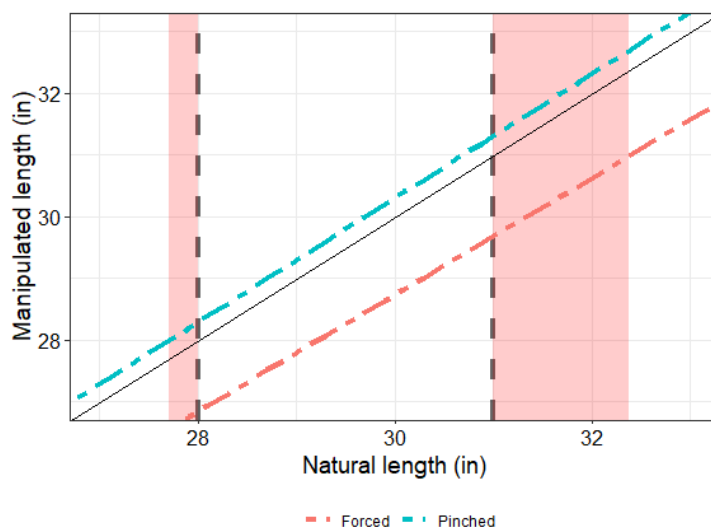


Figure C1. Potential increase in slot size (shaded red) by allowing both pinched (teal dashed line) and forced fanning (orange dashed line) measures for striped bass. A 1:1 line (thin black line) is provided for reference.

Appendix D.

State-Specific Recreational Seasonality Summary

Recreational catch (harvest and live releases) was analyzed by state and wave with MRIP data pooled from 2021, 2022, and 2024 (Figure 5 through Figure 8). Massachusetts through Virginia conduct MRIP sampling from wave 2 (Mar-Apr) through wave 6 (Nov-Dec), while Maine and New Hampshire only conduct MRIP sampling from wave 3 through wave 5 (May-Oct). North Carolina is the only state to conduct MRIP sampling in wave 1 (Jan-Feb).

Maine

Fish are caught in waves 3 – 5 (May-Oct) with total removals peaking in waves 4 – 5 (Jul-Oct). Wave 4 (Jul-Aug) and wave 5 (Sep-Oct) total removals are nearly equal in magnitude with their combined total removals making up 76% of total removals for Maine. Harvest in Maine peaks in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 49% followed by wave 3 (May-Jun) at 27% and wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 25%.

New Hampshire

Fish are caught in waves 3 – 5 (May-Oct) with total removals peaking in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) and making up 58% of total removals for New Hampshire. Harvest in New Hampshire peaks in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 63% followed by wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 21% and wave 3 (May-Jun) at 17%.

Massachusetts

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in waves 3 – 4 (May-Aug) wave 3 (May-Jun) and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) total removals are nearly equal in magnitude with their combined total removals making up 73% of total removals for Massachusetts. Harvest in Massachusetts peaks in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 52% followed by wave 3 (May-Jun) at 26% and wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 22%.

Rhode Island

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 3 (May-Jun) making up 34% of total removals for Rhode Island. Harvest in Rhode Island peaks in wave 3 (May-Jun) at 42% followed by wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 30% and wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 27%. Rhode Island does have wave 6 (Nov-Dec) harvest but the magnitude is trivial and comprises < 0.5% of the total harvest for Rhode Island.

Connecticut

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 2 (Mar-Apr) making up 34% of total removals for Connecticut. Harvest in Connecticut peaks in wave 3 (May-Jun) at 44% followed by wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 38%, wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 13%, and wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 3%.

New York

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 42% of total removals for New York. Harvest in New York also peaks in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 27% followed by wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 23%, wave 3 (May-Jun) at 20%, wave 2 (Mar-Apr) at 18%, and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 13%.

New Jersey

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 46% of total removals for New Jersey. Harvest in New Jersey also peaks in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 53% followed by wave 2 (Mar-Apr) at 24%, wave 3 (May-Jun) at 14%, wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 8%, and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 1%.

Delaware

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 58% of total removals for Delaware. Harvest in Delaware also peaks in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 52% followed by wave 2 (Mar-Apr) at 25%, wave 4 (July-Aug) at 23%, and wave 3 (May-Jun) at 1%. Delaware has no wave 5 (Sep-Oct) harvest and although the wave 3 (May-Jun) harvest is 1%, that equates to < 100 fish for Delaware.

Maryland Ocean

Fish are caught in wave 2 (Mar-Apr), wave 3 (May-June), wave 4 (Jul-Aug), and wave 6 (Nov-Dec). Total removals peak in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 78% of total removals for Maryland ocean. Harvest in Maryland ocean occurs in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) only with total harvest at ~ 3,000 fish.

Virginia Ocean

Fish are caught in wave 3 (May-Jun) and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) with total removals peaking in wave 4 (Jul-Aug) making up 67% of total removals for Virginia ocean. Total removals are entirely live releases with no harvest occurring in Virginia ocean.

North Carolina

North Carolina only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during waves 1 (Jan-Feb) and 6 (Nov-Dec) to be part of the coastal migratory stock. Total removals peaked in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 70% of wave 1 and 6 ocean removals for North Carolina. Total removals are entirely live releases with no harvest in the ocean during these waves for several years. 2021-2022 live releases were 0.1% of total ocean releases and 2024 releases were zero.

Maryland Chesapeake Bay

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 29% of total removals for Maryland. Harvest in Maryland is similar across waves 3 – 6 (May-Dec) with peak harvest in wave 3 (May-Jun) at 28% followed by wave 5 (Sep-Oct) at 26%, wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 25%, and wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 21%.

Virginia Chesapeake Bay

Fish are caught in waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) with total removals peaking in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) making up 47% of total removals for Virginia. Harvest in Virginia peaks in wave 6 (Nov-Dec) at 58% followed by wave 3 (May-Jun) at 31%, 5 (Sep-Oct) at 7%, and wave 4 (Jul-Aug) at 3%.

Appendix E.

Other Species Analysis and Figures

MRIP data from 2021 through 2024 for both the ocean fishery and Chesapeake Bay fishery were compiled by state and by wave to explore *a)* the top ten species reported as either primary or secondary targets on trips that also targeted striped bass, and *b)* the top ten species caught on trips that also caught striped bass. This section summarizes results for species most commonly targeted/caught with striped bass.

New England: species targeted on trips that also targeted striped bass

In New England, waves 4 (Jul-Aug) and 5 (Sep-Oct) tend to have the highest diversity of species co-targeted with striped bass. In Maine and New Hampshire, a majority of trips targeting striped bass and trips where striped bass are caught, are also targeting/catching bait species. When fishing in the ocean, anglers from Maine and New Hampshire often target groundfish, but will actively look for opportunistic fishing (striped bass and bluefish) if they happen upon them working a school of baitfish. Most anglers supply their own bait and will begin their trip fishing for baitfish. This is why a large proportion of the total catch on trips where striped bass are caught in Maine and New Hampshire is baitfish, mainly Atlantic mackerel and Atlantic menhaden. In Maine and New Hampshire, when bait fish are removed from the analysis, pollock is the majority of non-bait catch.

Aside from baitfish in Maine and New Hampshire, bluefish is the most co-targeted species with striped bass in New England across most waves. Both scup and summer flounder are reported as targeted in Massachusetts through Connecticut, and in higher proportions as you move southward. Black sea bass is reported as targeted with higher proportion in waves 3-5 (May-Oct) in Rhode Island and Connecticut, but only during waves 3 (May-Jun) and 4 (Jul-Aug) in Massachusetts. Rhode Island and Connecticut have similar trends in proportions of reported targeted species, with some notable variation in the proportion of reported targeting of tautog between the waves. Tautog is targeted in relatively small proportion in all waves in Massachusetts.

New England: species caught on trips that also caught striped bass

In New England, waves 2 (Mar-Apr) and 6 (Nov-Dec) generally show minimal amounts of other species caught with striped bass, with most other species being caught consistently during waves 3-5 (May-Oct). Bluefish, black sea bass, summer flounder, and scup are commonly caught from Massachusetts through Rhode Island on trips where striped bass is also caught from waves 3 -5 (May-Oct). During waves 2 – 6 (Mar-Dec) in Massachusetts, Atlantic mackerel, is caught in the highest proportions compared to other species. Atlantic mackerel is not reported south of Rhode Island, with the dominant bait species switching to Atlantic menhaden south of this state.

Mid-Atlantic: species targeted on trips that also targeted striped bass

Overall, there is high variability of reported targeted species throughout the Mid-Atlantic states with some notable overlap occurring between neighboring states. From New York through

Maryland, bluefish remains the dominant species that is reported as targeted on trips that also target striped bass. Bluefish are reported as targeted in all states in all waves, except Maryland which only reports co-targeting in some waves. Summer flounder are reported as targeted in New York through Delaware in relatively large proportions during waves 3-5 (May-Oct), and during wave 2 (Mar-Apr) in New York. Black sea bass are only reported as targeted in notable proportions in New York and New Jersey, although both in relatively low proportion compared to other species. During wave 6 (Nov-Dec) all states have a relatively high proportion of trips targeting tautog, particularly Delaware.

Mid-Atlantic: species caught on trips that also caught striped bass

Bluefish are caught in all the Mid-Atlantic states on trips that also caught striped bass but are not caught during wave 2 (Mar-Apr) until you reach Delaware. New York and New Jersey both have the highest proportion of catch as black sea bass and bluefish through most waves. These states also both have notable catches of summer flounder and tautog in waves 3-6, with the addition of scup in New York and white perch in New Jersey during this timeframe. Summer flounder are caught in small amounts in Delaware, and only during wave 4 (Jul-Aug) in Maryland. Similar to the New England states, there is notable variation in tautog catch between states and waves, however, tautog are caught in all states New York through Delaware during wave 6 (Nov-Dec). White perch are caught during all waves in both New Jersey and Delaware, which may be catch in Delaware Bay.

Chesapeake Bay: species targeted on trips that also targeted striped bass

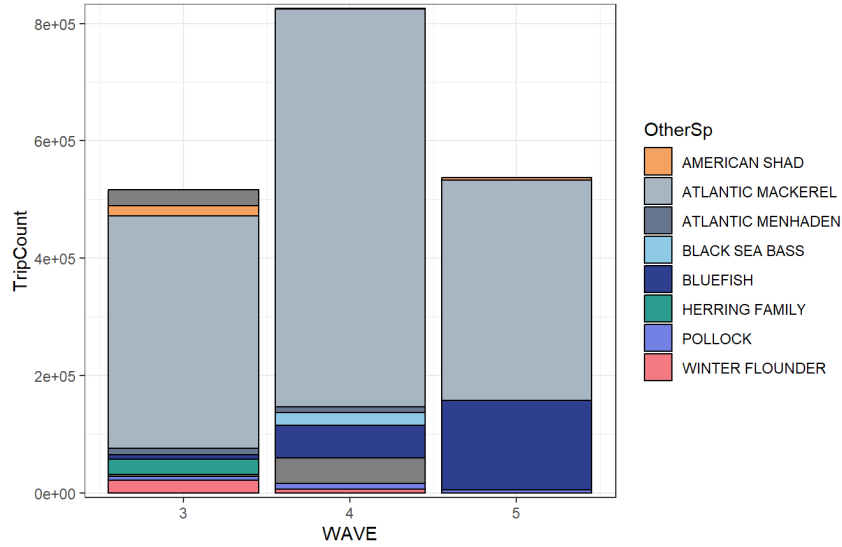
White perch and red drum are commonly targeted with striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay, with white perch being reported more frequently in Maryland and red drum more frequently in Virginia. Blue catfish are targeted in significant proportion during waves 3-6 (May-Dec) in both states. Spot are targeted in relatively large proportion in Maryland during waves 3-5 (May-Oct), although this is likely the result of being used as bait while fishing for striped bass. Overall, Maryland has more variety of species that are reported as targeted with striped bass in each wave than in Virginia.

Chesapeake Bay: species caught on trips that also caught striped bass

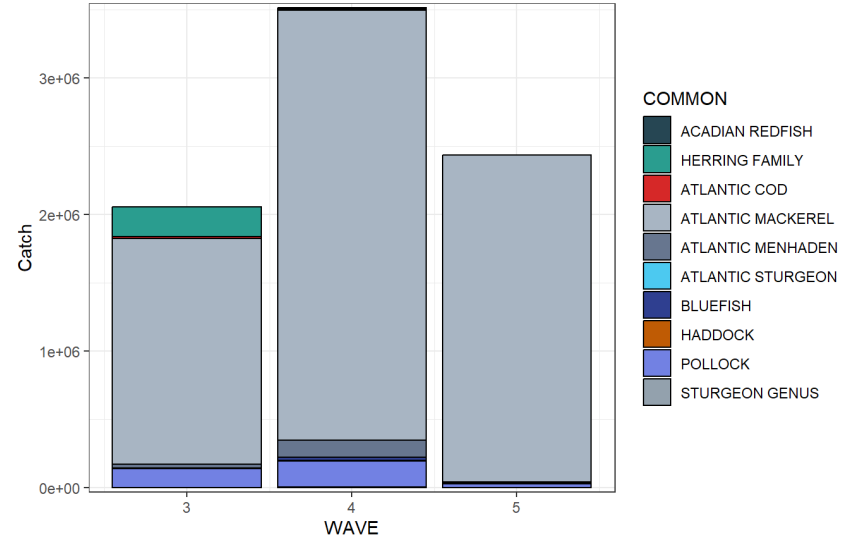
White perch are caught during all waves in Maryland with particularly high catch during waves 3 -5 (May-Oct). Virginia had white perch reported for waves 2 -6 (Mar-Dec), but at much lower proportions than what was seen in Maryland. Blue catfish were caught, but at relatively low proportions in both states for all waves except wave 2 (Mar-Apr) in Virginia. Atlantic croaker made up a large proportion of total catch in Virginia for waves 3 (May-Jun) and 4 (July-Aug). Spotted sea trout were caught in small proportions in Maryland during waves 4 (Jul-Aug) and 5 (Sep-Oct) but it was caught during all waves in Virginia with the highest proportion during waves 5 (Sep-Oct) and 6 (Nov-Dec). Red drum catch was low in Maryland, but increased in Virginia from waves 3 – 6 (May-Dec). In both Maryland and Virginia, waves 3 -5 (May-Oct) show greater diversity in total catch than compared to waves 2 (Mar-Apr) and 6 (Nov-Dec).

Maine

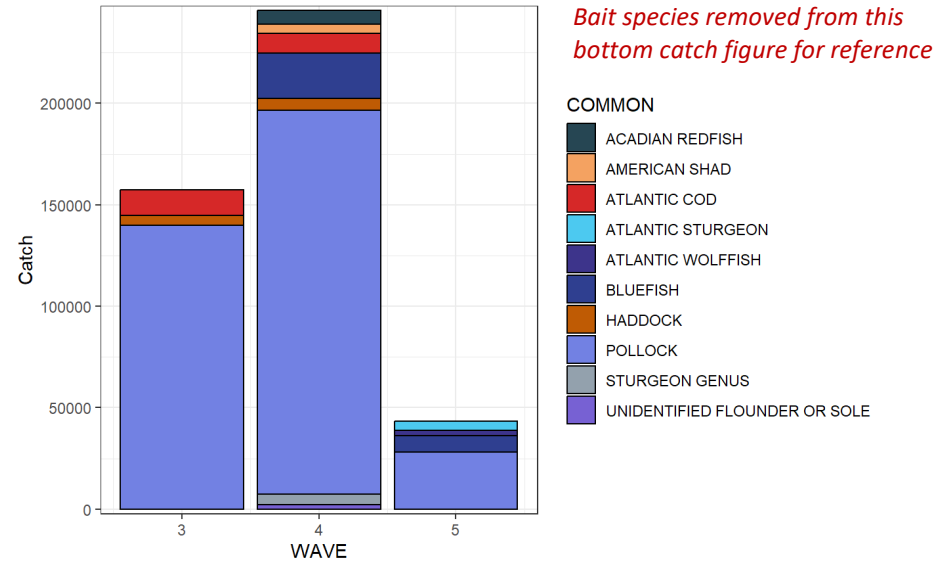
Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): ME



Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): ME

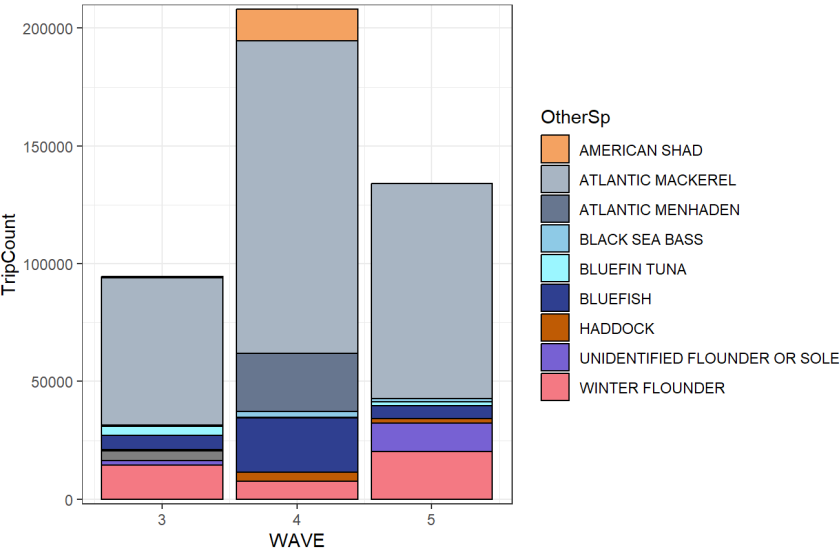


Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): ME

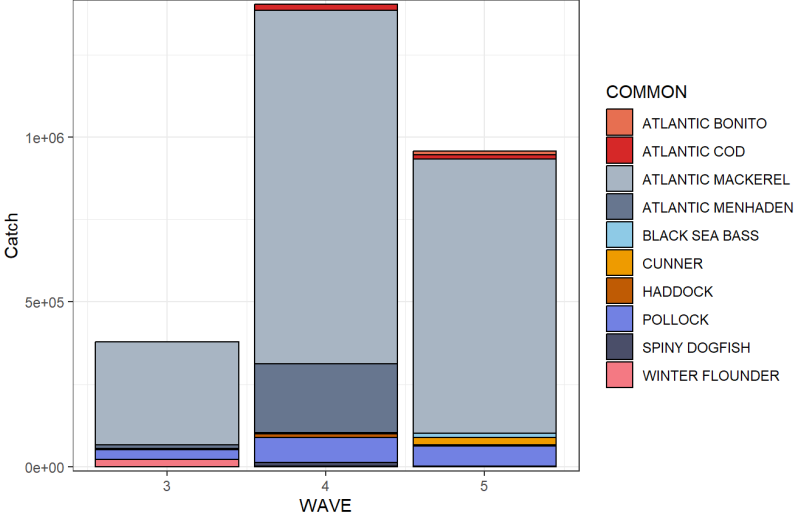


New Hampshire

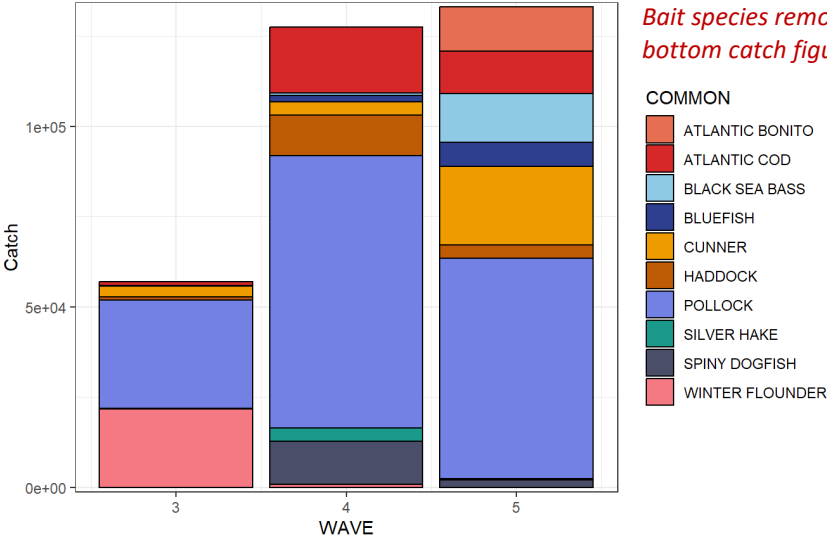
Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NH



Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NH

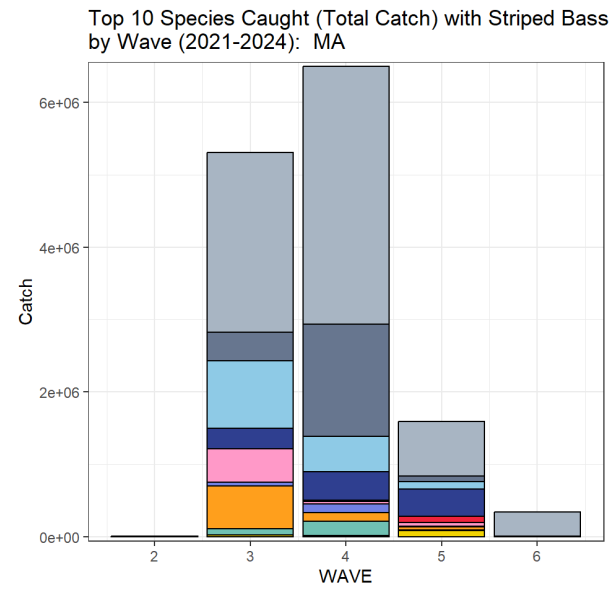
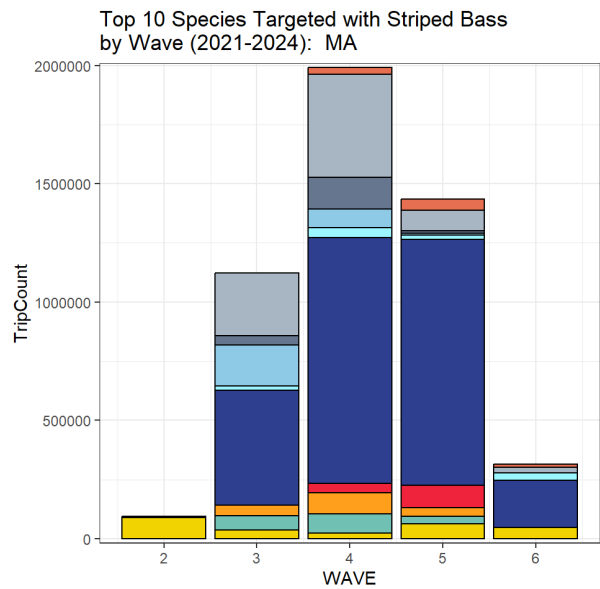


Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NH

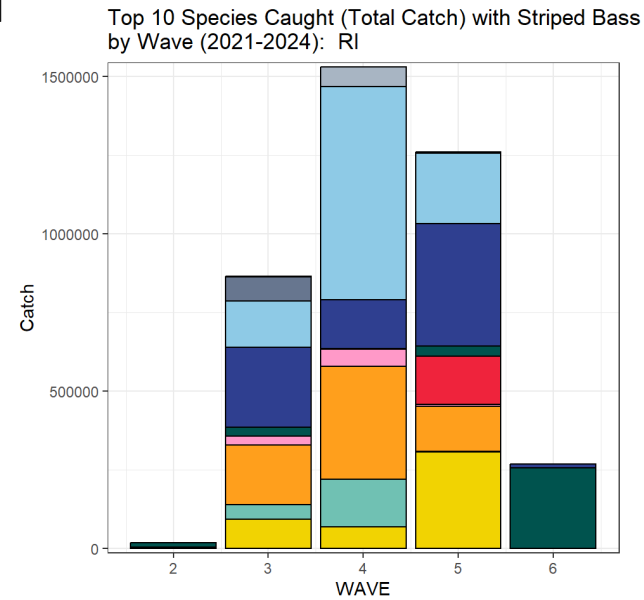
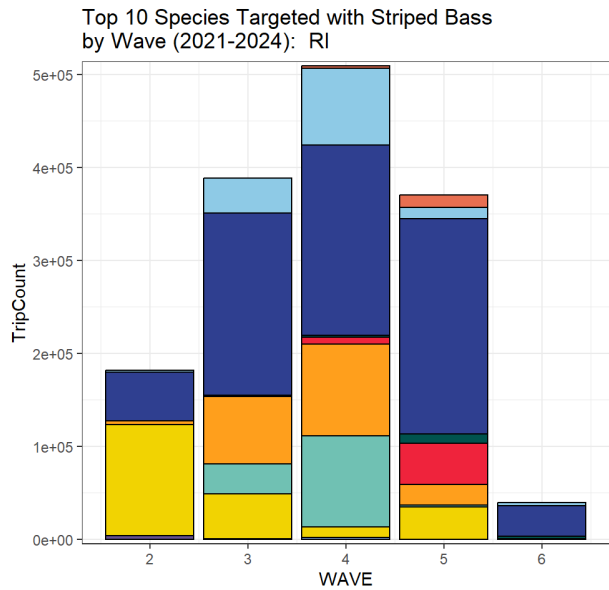


*Bait species removed from this
bottom catch figure for reference*

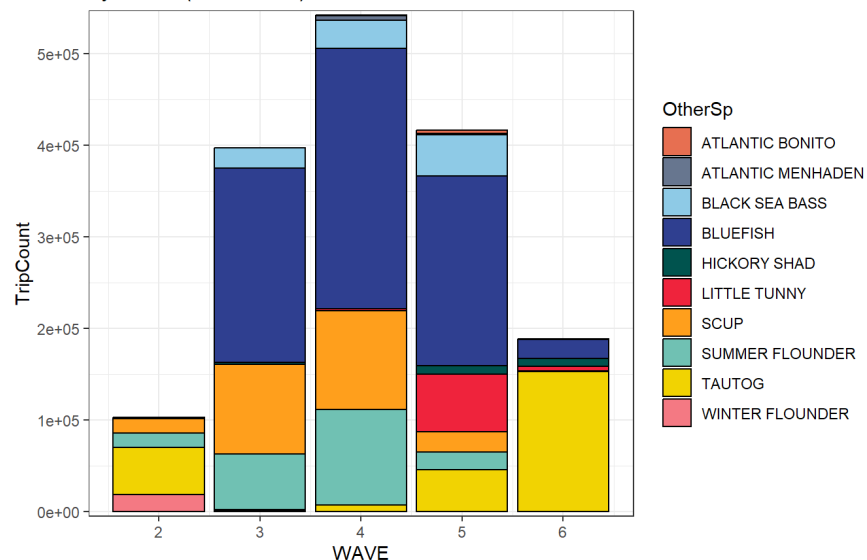
Massachusetts



Rhode Island

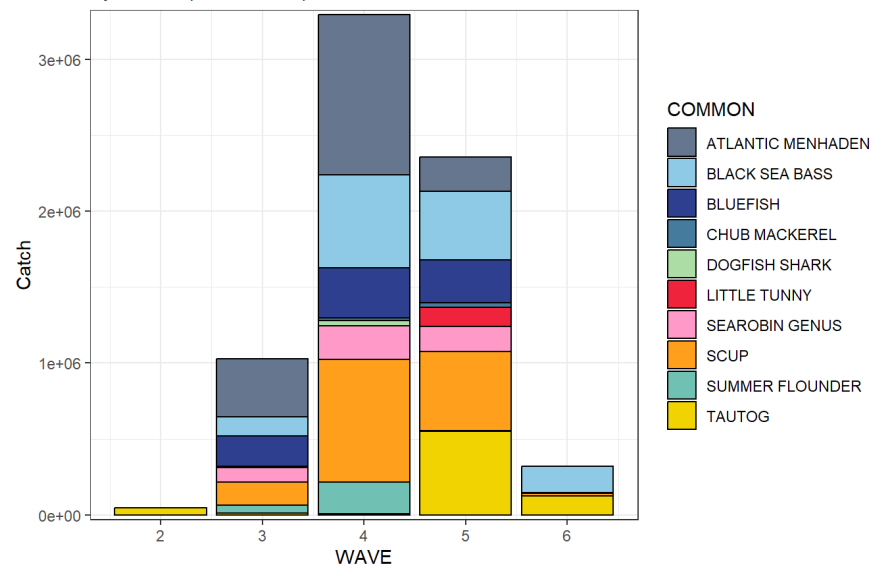


Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): CT

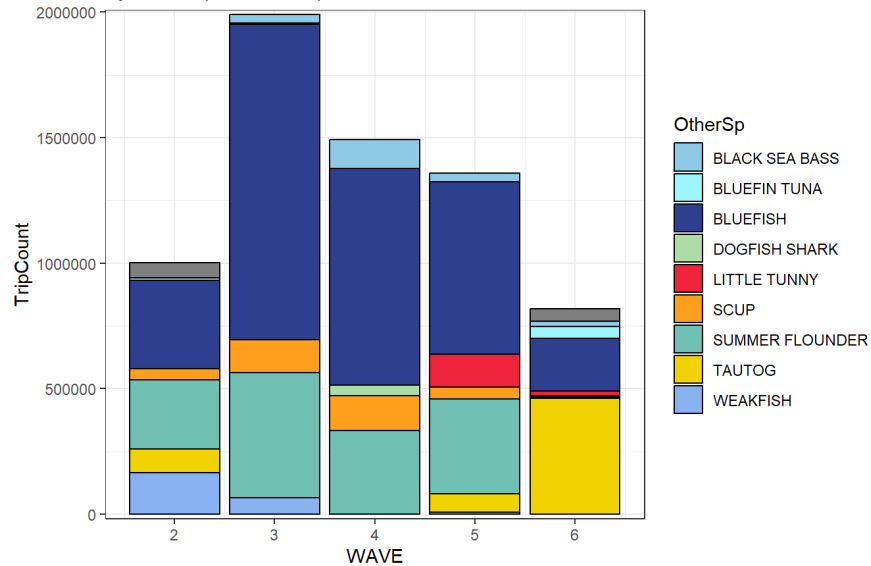


Connecticut

Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): CT

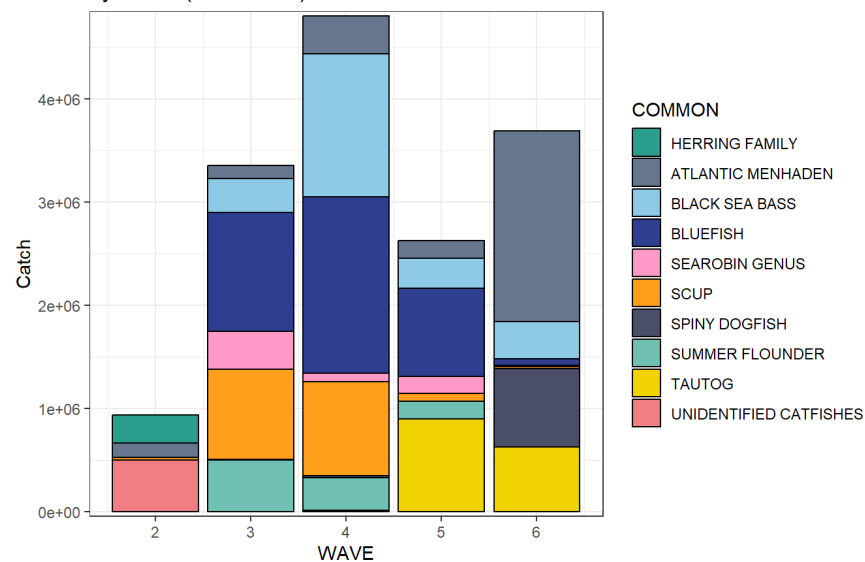


Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NY

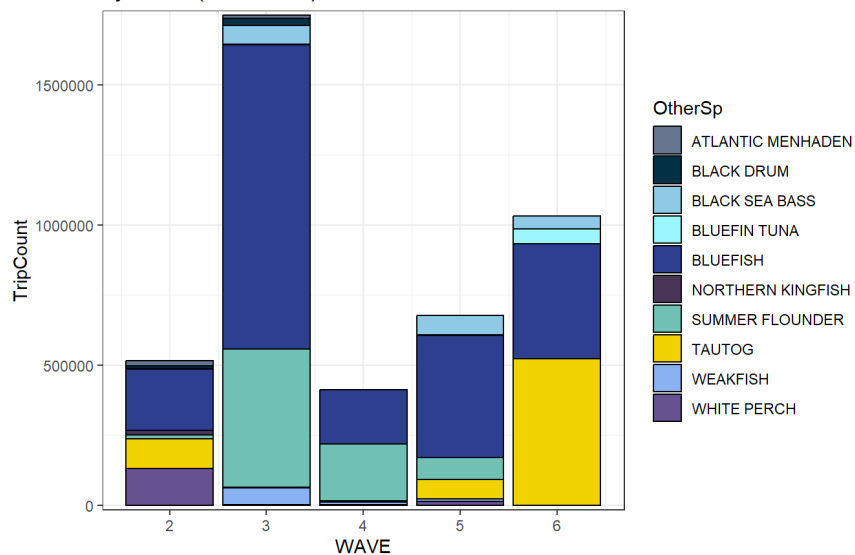


New York

Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NY

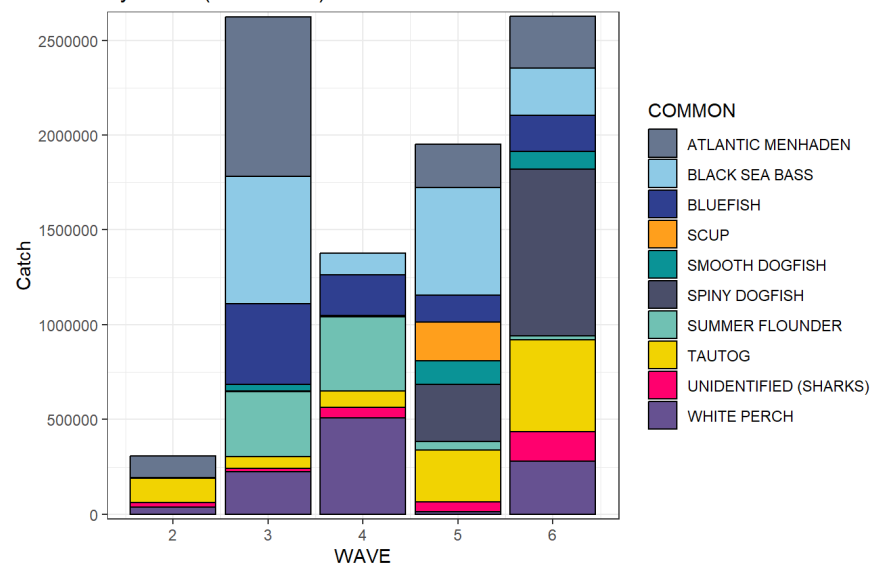


Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NJ

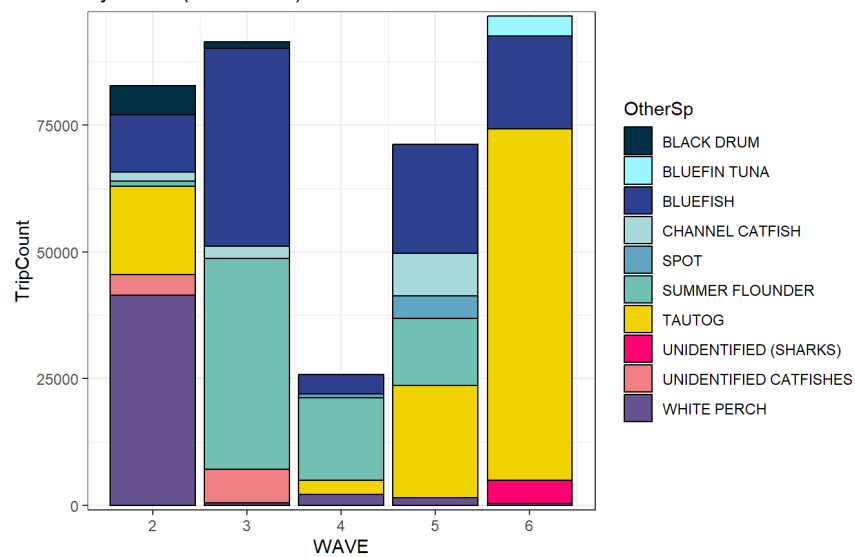


New Jersey

Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): NJ

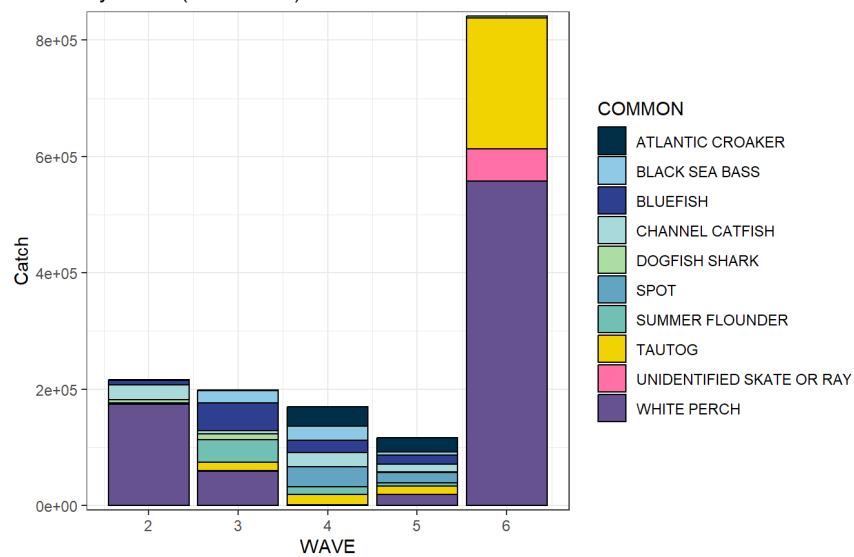


Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): DE



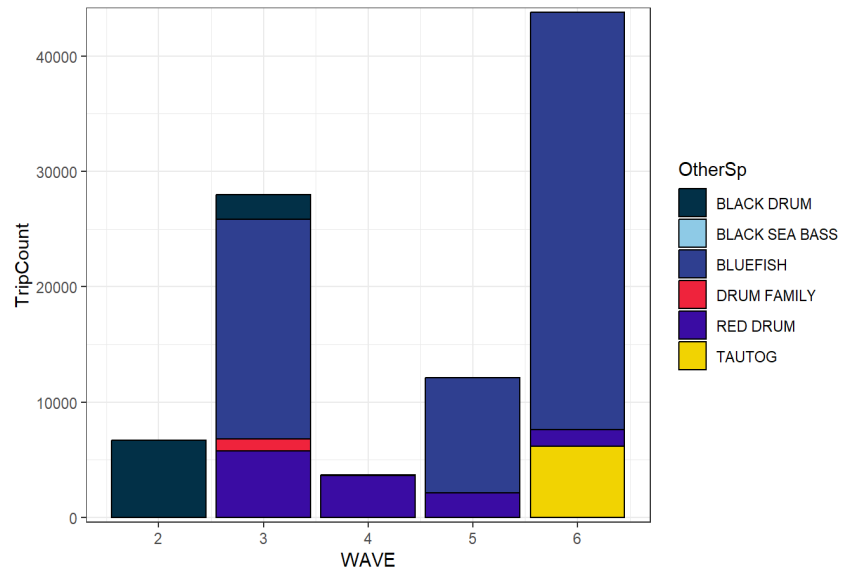
Delaware

Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): DE

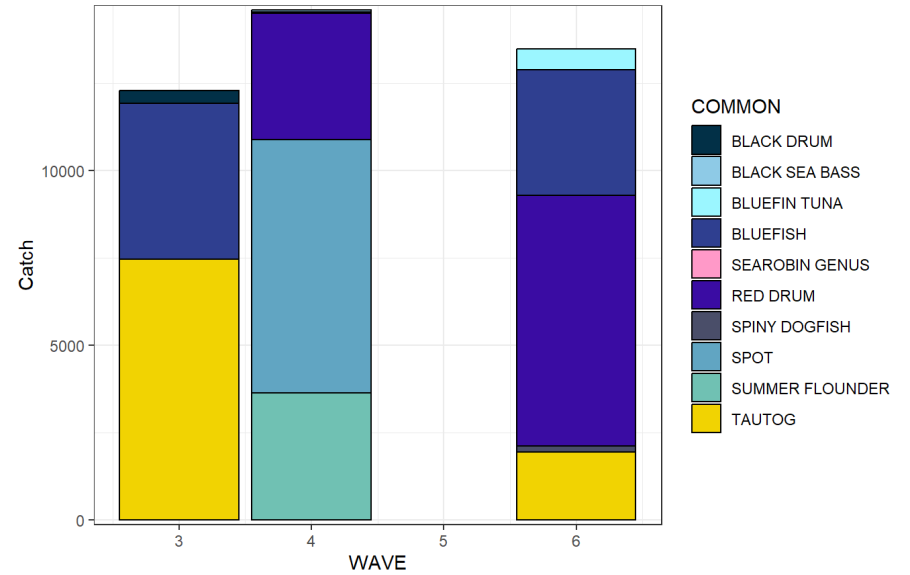


Maryland Ocean

Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): MD

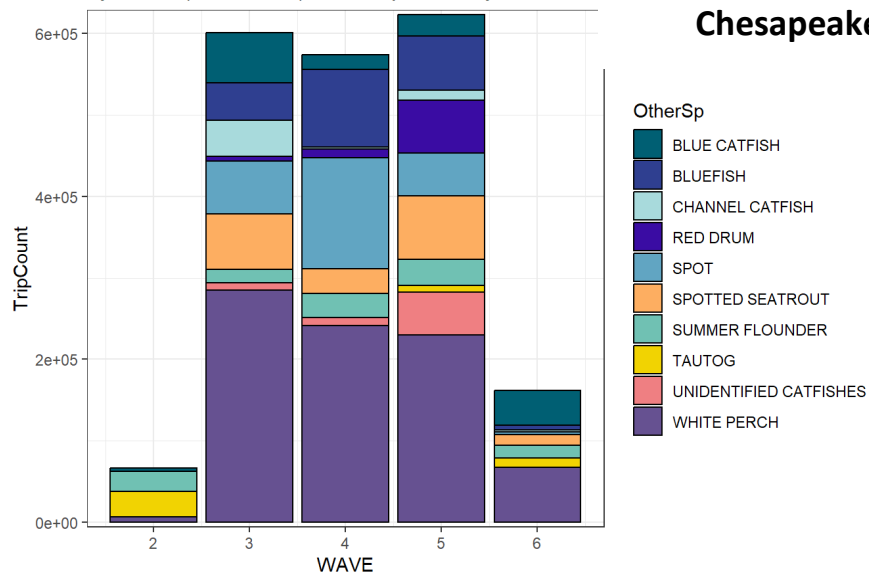


Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024): MD



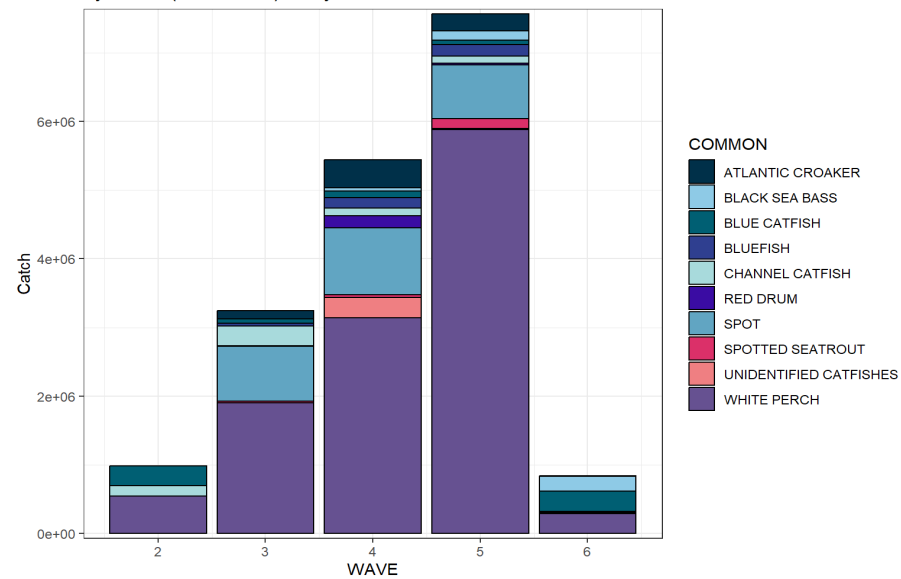
No figures available for Virginia ocean or North Carolina ocean due to limited data.

Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024) - Chesapeake Bay: MD

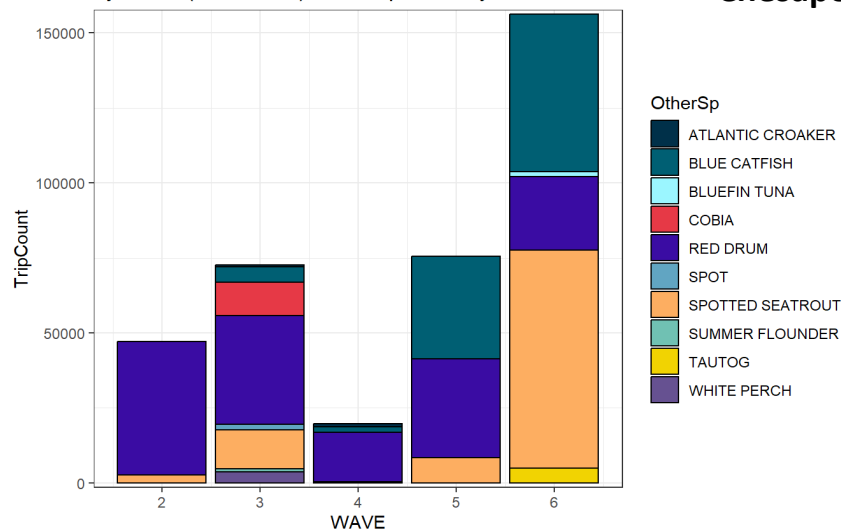


Maryland Chesapeake Bay

Top 10 Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024) - Bay: MD

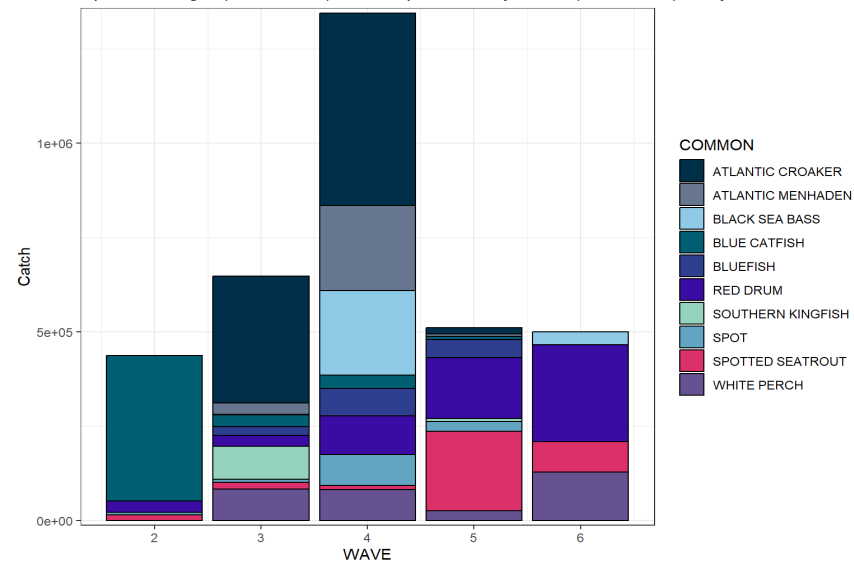


Top 10 Species Targeted with Striped Bass
by Wave (2021-2024) - Chesapeake Bay: VA



Virginia Chesapeake Bay

Species Caught (Total Catch) with Striped Bass by Wave (2021-2024) - Bay: VA





Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfmc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

FROM: Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Development Team

DATE: April 22, 2025

SUBJECT: Draft Addendum III Topics for Board Discussion and PDT Supporting Information

This memorandum outlines additional information from the Plan Development Team for the Board's May 2025 discussion on Draft Addendum III. The PDT notes issues for Board discussion regarding seasonal closure and commercial tagging options; provides rationale for some options that were excluded from the document; and notes possible additional options the Board may discuss.

Seasonal Closure Issues for Board Discussion

First, the Board should discuss whether the draft addendum should include options for seasonal closures less than 14 days, or whether those options should be listed as 14 days. The Technical Committee (TC) has previously noted season closures less than two weeks in duration are unlikely to be effective due to concerns of effort shifting as well as the calculations which assume the average reductions from both weekends and weekdays. Therefore, for example, if a closure option is estimated to achieve the 7% reduction with a 10-day closure, should the document indicate the option is a 10-day closure or a 14-day closure?

Second, the Board should discuss the timing of seasonal closure options for New York. New York is one of only two ocean states with state-wide ocean closures during the year. Virginia also has an ocean closure (during March and part of April), but Virginia has had zero ocean harvest and very few releases the past several years, therefore Virginia's current closure has minimal impact on the seasonal closure analysis. New York's ocean fishery is open from April 15 through December 15 with catch-and-release fishing allowed while the season is closed. This means New York is open for harvest for 16 of 61 days during Wave 2 (Mar-Apr) and 45 of 61 days in Wave 6 (Nov-Dec). New York's Hudson River season is open two weeks earlier, from April 1 through November 30.

The ocean season closure analysis for Draft Addendum III assumes a constant daily harvest rate for the ocean across the entire Wave. In reality, daily harvest is not constant and varies depending on type of day (weekend, weekday, holiday) and can vary if fish are more available during one part of a Wave (e.g., fish may be more available near the end of Wave 2 vs. early in Wave 2). For New York, this constant daily harvest rate assumption means that the closure analysis slightly overestimates fish saved per day for the Mid-Atlantic region if a Wave 2 or 6 closure is implemented when New York is already closed (i.e., NY not actually reducing harvest when already closed) and slightly underestimates fish saved per day if a Wave 2 or 6 closure is implemented during New York's open period (i.e., NY would be reducing more harvest per day in reality than is assumed in the analysis). Since New York is already closed for most of Wave 2, any new harvest closure during New York's current open window of April 15-30 will impact a larger portion of New York's Wave 2 fishery as compared to the same closure impacting a smaller portion of other states' Wave 2 fisheries. Any new harvest closure in Wave 6 during New York's

current open window of November 1-December 15 would also impact a larger portion of New York's fishery as compared to other states, but it would have a lesser impact than Wave 2.

The Board should discuss how Wave 2 or Wave 6 season closures would apply to New York. Would New York need to implement the new required closure days during their current open period, which may result in differing closure dates for New York compared to the other states in that region? For example, if a 14-day closure is required during Wave 6 and the other Mid-Atlantic states close from December 18-31, would New York implement the 14-day closure starting December 2 (i.e., shift their current first day of closure, December 16, back 14 days)? For any Wave 2 closure in the Mid-Atlantic, would New York only close for a maximum of 16 days, which would eliminate its Wave 2 fishery? From an enforcement perspective, NY's existing closure already contributes to different season dates between neighboring states.

Third, the Board should discuss the timing of seasonal closure options for North Carolina. North Carolina only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during Wave 1 and Wave 6 (Jan-Feb and Nov-Dec) to be part of the coastal migratory stock. North Carolina ocean catch in Waves 1 and 6 has been very low, with no harvest since 2011 and very low release estimates for five of the last thirteen years (the other year eight years' estimates were 0 releases). For Draft Addendum III, the Board should consider if North Carolina should align its closure with the Mid-Atlantic region, even if the closure is not during Wave 1 or Wave 6 when coastal migratory striped bass may be available, or if North Carolina should implement the same-length closure during Wave 1 or Wave 6 and potentially differ from the other Mid-Atlantic states.

Commercial Tagging Issues for Board Discussion

The FMP's current commercial tagging requirements do not define "point of harvest" (i.e., immediately upon possession or within specific parameters outlined by various state regulations). At least one state currently specifies tagging at the point of landing (i.e., before landing or putting on shore) as compared to tagging at point of harvest due to safety concerns raised by industry. For the option that would require tagging at the point of harvest, the Board should consider whether the intent of this option is to allow tagging at point of landing or just at point of harvest. The Board should be as specific as possible. For example, if the Board wanted to include point of landing for consideration, the Tautog FMP allows tagging at either point of harvest or point of landing and specifies: *"All commercially caught tautog will be tagged by the commercially-permitted harvester at the time of harvest or prior to offloading."*

Excluded Option: Delaware through North Carolina as Separate Region

The Board requested the PDT consider whether Delaware through North Carolina should be a separate region from the Mid-Atlantic states (New Jersey north to Connecticut or Rhode Island). The season analysis was conducted for this three-region split with DE-NC as its own region. The season analysis excludes NC data since no other states have wave 1 sampling and there has been zero ocean harvest and very few releases that only occur during wave 6 of the analysis. The primary issue for this separate region is limited data. Fishery activity in the ocean has been relatively low in these states so catch and effort are very low. There are very few options for this region alone to achieve a 7% reduction since harvest is so low and fishery activity is sporadic. Additionally, the PSEs for this region are higher than PSEs for the other regions. The PDT decided the best approach is to combine Delaware through North Carolina with the other Mid-Atlantic states, and to consider dual Wave closure options for the large Mid-Atlantic region to address equity concerns (i.e., if states close for X days during Wave A and X days during Wave B, all states would be impacted by at least one of those closures).

Excluded Option: Days Off Per Week for Mode Splits

Following the February 2025 Board meeting, Board members provided guidance to the PDT about what type of recreational mode split options would be of interest to stakeholders. The guidance included a request to explore an option that considered implementing seasonal closures in the for-hire fishery using a “days off per week” approach instead of closing for consecutive days (e.g., close every Monday for X weeks, instead of closing for X consecutive days). One primary concern about this approach is how any reduction would be quantified given the current analysis averages the reductions achieved over weekdays vs. weekends and holidays. There is also concern that for-hire boats could simply shift effort to other days of the week which could result in a limited reduction. There may still be some reduction but it would be difficult to quantify and the PDT would need to explore what assumptions to make for any such analysis. If the day off is on a weekday, the realized reduction could end up less than estimated. This approach would also not align with the TC guidance that season closures less than two weeks in duration are unlikely to be effective.

The PDT also discussed equity considerations for a “days off per week” approach. Impacts on part-time and full-time for-hire businesses could differ. Part-time charters may have the flexibility to shift trips around a “days off per week” closure and still book the same number of trips in a Wave. A full-time business which operates 7 days per week would not have the same flexibility and therefore could experience a greater impact from the closure. However, the PDT did note that a “days off per week” closure could help address equity issues between states since the days off would span an entire Wave and likely span multiple Waves in a region. Therefore, this could potentially have a more even impact across states due to varying regional fish availability as compared to selecting one finite time period for a closure.

Potential Additional Option: Modified Maryland Season Closure Options for New Season Baseline

If the Board adds an option to Draft Addendum III for a new recreational season baseline for Maryland Chesapeake Bay, a new set of closure options for Maryland Chesapeake Bay would be added to reflect the baseline proposal. The season closure analysis is based on the proportion of harvest and releases occurring during each Wave and takes into account the number of days currently open in each Wave for Maryland and Virginia Chesapeake Bay. A new season baseline for Maryland would change the baseline proportion of expected harvest and releases in each Wave due to shorter closures in some Waves and longer closures in others as the starting point before any new closure days are added.

Potential Additional Option: 10% Reduction

Projection scenarios indicate a 1% and 7% reduction in 2026 total removals are required to achieve $F_{rebuild}$ 50% and $F_{rebuild}$ 60% in 2026, respectively. The TC notes the outcome of management changes designed to achieve small changes (i.e., reductions or liberalizations 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). In addition, the effectiveness of measures estimated to achieve a small percent reduction on paper for the recreational fishery would be overwhelmed by uncertainty in the reduction calculations themselves, including uncertainty around fish availability, effort, and angler behavior.

Because none of the options in the Draft addendum align with guidance from the Technical Committee on the magnitude of reductions, enclosed is an outline of management options to achieve a 10% reduction in fishery removals. **The PDT is not making a recommendation on whether to include these 10% reduction options but is providing the information for completeness recognizing the TC guidance.**

Option Outline for a 10% Coastwide Reduction

Even Sector Reductions: Commercial -10% and Recreational -10%

Under each option, commercial quotas would be reduced by 10%. The following table specifies recreational measures designed to achieve a 10% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Ocean Recreational Fishery for 10% Recreational Reduction				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
	All	28" to 31" slot [0%]	-10%	Enclosed
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 28" to 31" slot FH: 28" to 33" slot [+1%]	-11%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -10%	TBD
		FH: 28" to 32" slot [+12%]	FH: -20%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -10%	TBD
		FH: 28" to 33" slot [+28%]	FH: -30%	TBD
Chesapeake Bay Fishery for 10% Recreational Reduction				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
	All	19" to 22" slot [-15%]	Status Quo	NA
	All	22" minimum size [-10%]	Status Quo	NA
	All	19" to 24" slot [0%]	-10%	Enclosed
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 22" slot FH: 19" to 24" slot [-14%]	Status Quo	NA
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 25" slot [+1%]	-11%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 19" to 24" slot [0%]	PS: -10%	TBD
		FH: 19" to 25" slot [+13%]	FH: -20%	TBD

No Commercial Reduction: Commercial -0% and Recreational -11%

Under each option, commercial quotas would not take a reduction. The following table specifies recreational measures designed to achieve an 11% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Reductions based on Sector Contribution to Total Removals: Commercial -1.1% and Recreational -11%

Under each option, commercial quotas would be reduced by 1.1%. The following table specifies recreational measures designed to achieve an 11% reduction via changes to size limits and/or season closures.

Ocean Recreational Fishery for 11% Recreational Reduction				
	Modes	Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
	All	28" to 31" slot [0%]	-11%	TBD
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 28" to 31" slot FH: 28" to 33" slot [+1%]	-12%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -11%	TBD
		FH: 28" to 32" slot [+12%]	FH: -21%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 28" to 31" slot [0%]	PS: -11%	TBD
		FH: 28" to 33" slot [+28%]	FH: -31%	TBD
Chesapeake Bay Recreational Fishery for 11% Recreational Reduction				
		Size Limit	Season Closure Needed	Closure Table
	All	19" to 22" slot [-15%]	Status Quo	NA
	All	23" minimum size [-19%]	Status Quo	NA
	All	19" to 24" slot [0%]	-11%	TBD
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 22" slot FH: 19" to 24" slot [-14%]	Status Quo	NA
	Split For-Hire Exemption	PS: 19" to 24" slot FH: 19" to 25" slot [+1%]	-12%	TBD
	Split Separate Equal Mode Reductions	PS: 19" to 24" slot [0%]	PS: -11%	TBD
		FH: 19" to 25" slot [+13%]	FH: -21%	TBD

Commercial quotas (pounds of fish) for the 10% reduction options. Status quo reflects current Addendum II commercial quotas.

State/Region	Status Quo & No Reduction	-10% Reduction	-1.1% Reduction
Ocean Commercial Quotas			
Maine	143	129	141
New Hampshire	3,289	2,960	3,253
Massachusetts	683,773	615,396	676,251
Rhode Island	138,467	124,620	136,944
Connecticut	13,585	12,227	13,436
New York	595,868	536,281	589,313
New Jersey	200,798	180,718	198,589
Delaware	132,501	119,251	131,043
Maryland	82,857	74,571	81,946
Virginia	116,282	104,654	115,003
North Carolina	274,810	247,329	271,787
Ocean Total	2,242,373	2,018,136	2,217,707
Chesapeake Bay Commercial Quota			
Chesapeake Bay Total	2,791,533	2,512,379	2,760,825

Season Closure Tables

The season closure table for the Even Sector Reduction option for all modes requiring a 10% reduction via seasonal closure is included here for context. If the Board adds the coastwide 10% reduction option to the draft addendum, the tables for the mode split options and tables for the -0% Commercial Reduction/-11% Recreational Reduction Option and the -1.1% Commercial Reduction/-11% Recreational Reduction Option will be added.

Recreational season closures to achieve a 10% or 11% reduction in recreational removals will be longer than the options listed in the draft addendum document for a 7% or 8% reduction.

Note in the Chesapeake Bay, PRFC and DC can each choose whether to implement their closure during the same wave as Maryland or the same wave as Virginia. Although complete alignment among the four Bay jurisdictions is difficult given the current differences in seasons, the Bay jurisdictions should coordinate to align seasons as much as possible. Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions should consider whether new closures could be added to existing closures and whether the type of existing closure (no-targeting vs. no-harvest) should be consistent in a wave.

All closures are in number of days. ^ indicates closing the entire wave will not achieve the reduction.

Closures for -10% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
All Ocean	Wave 3 & Wave 6	13	18	26
ME-MA	Wave 3	25	58	61^
ME-MA	Wave 4	18	32	33
ME-MA	Wave 5	29	43	61^
RI-NC	Wave 2	25	29	61
RI-NC	Wave 3	42	50	61^
RI-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
RI-NC	Wave 5	53	61^	61^
RI-NC	Wave 6	16	21	31
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	16	19	32
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	21	25	45
RI-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	17	21	37
RI-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	12	15	22
RI-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	14	18	27
ME-RI	Wave 3	24	44	61^
ME-RI	Wave 4	19	33	36
ME-RI	Wave 5	29	40	61^
CT-NC	Wave 2	24	28	58
CT-NC	Wave 3	45	54	61^
CT-NC	Wave 4	62^	62^	62^
CT-NC	Wave 5	56	61^	61^
CT-NC	Wave 6	15	20	29
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 3	16	19	32
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 4	20	24	45
CT-NC	Wave 2 & Wave 5	17	21	36
CT-NC	Wave 3 & Wave 6	11	15	21
CT-NC	Wave 4 & Wave 6	13	18	26

Closures for -10% Reduction for All Modes				
Region	Waves	No Target (SB only trips eliminated)	No Target (SB trips switch targets)	No Harvest
MD Bay	Wave 3	25	30	34
MD Bay	Wave 4	24	28	31
MD Bay	Wave 5	27	31	40
MD Bay	Wave 6	20	21	33
VA Bay	Wave 3	14	14	17
VA Bay	Wave 4	Already closed all of Wave 4		
VA Bay	Wave 5	28^	28^	28^
VA Bay	Wave 6	12	14	19

From: [G2W2](#)
To: [Emilie Franke](#)
Subject: FW: Striped Bass
Date: Thursday, February 6, 2025 4:35:25 PM

From: Gerard C Addonizio <gaddoniz@med.cornell.edu>
Sent: Thursday, February 6, 2025 1:32 PM
To: G2W2 <G2W2@asmfc.org>
Subject: [External] Striped Bass

To ASMFC: As someone who has fished recreationally on Cape Cod for striped bass and bluefish, I am shocked by your option of "no targeting of striped bass". I have spoken to many recreational anglers and the response has been the same. If there is "no targeting" of striped bass, they will continue to fish for bluefish which, as you know, have very similar fishing seasons and are caught using the same lures that attract striped bass. Therefore, the "no targeting" option is useless and should be discarded. Realistically you have two options: 1) less or no harvesting of striped bass 2) periods of time where there is no fishing at all. The latter option would be painful for recreational and commercial fishermen but at least this option could be enforced and would avoid the "make believe" no targeting fantasy. Thank you for listening. Gerard Addonizio

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: [Comments](#)
To: [Emilie Franke](#)
Subject: FW: [External] Atlantic Stiped Bass
Date: Monday, February 24, 2025 10:49:59 AM

From: John Giannini <johngiannini72@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2025 3:24 PM
To: Comments <comments@asmfc.org>
Subject: [External] Atlantic Stiped Bass

Gentlemen:

I would like to offer my thoughts on the situation with Striped Bass stocks and the proposed amendments to fishing regulations that are being considered. I have been fishing recreationally for striped bass for almost 50 years and have seen both good years and bad and am not in favor of any closure to recreational fishing. I recognize that stocks are in trouble, but I think any closure would be detrimental to the fishery and disastrous for hundreds of businesses that depend on revenue derived from this great sport. The effects on Tackle shops, sporting goods stores, marinas, charter boats and businesses down stream such as tackle manufacturers, hotels, restaurants etc. could be disastrous. Instead of addressing just one facet of the problem (recreational fishing) I suggest a more comprehensive approach to give the species the best chance of reproducing and thriving:

1. Do away with the bonus tag program and make adjustments as required to the size limits so that the appropriate year classes are protected.
2. Strengthen regulations on commercial exploitation of atlantic menhaden and other forage species. I personally have seen bunker boats setting their nets within site of the beach. .
3. Water quality: Strengthen regulations on discharges and pollution of key watersheds
such as the Hudson, the Delaware and the Chesapeake Bay where striped bass spawn so that spawning is more successful and fish fry have a better chance at survival.

I think that only by addressing all of the problems that the fishery faces will we be able to successfully increase the population of this great fish. I also believe that all players in the game must make contributions to the solution rather than saddling one group with all of the pain in order to get the desired result.

Thank you for your time. Feel free to contact me by return email if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

John P. Giannini, P.E.

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: [Info \(ASMFC\)](#)
To: [Emilie Franke](#)
Subject: FW: [External] New website contact submission from Contact Us
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 10:43:50 AM

From: info@asmfc.org <info@asmfc.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 6, 2025 3:41 PM
To: Info (ASMFC) <info@ASMFC.ORG>
Subject: [External] New website contact submission from Contact Us

Name

Charlie Labar

Email

lunchbox1157@gmail.com

Comments

I have a serious question, amfc is supposed to be protecting the striper population , so you restrict anglers to 28 to 31 inch fish @1 fish per day , buy new york party boats sell excess fish caught by anglers , really , are you dumb or just plain stupid, this is the most retarded abuse of power, I hope new york boat capt are paying you people well under the table , my email is lunchbox1157@gmail.com if you have and questions about my statement

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From: [Earl Granderath](#)
To: [Comments](#)
Subject: [External] Stripes
Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 1:27:31 PM

Stop the before George Washington bridge foolish harvest. That's where your spawning fish are getting decimated

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

APRIL 2025 NEFMC MEETING SUMMARY

The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) met April 14-17 in Mystic, CT. Below, find meeting highlights with links to relevant documents and Council **motions** denoted in bold (consensus unless Y/N/A). The NEFMC meets next June 24-26 in Freeport, ME.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- New Administrative Officer: Sharon Ferrant
- In response to budget uncertainties, the Council has made changes to the 2026 meeting schedule including a virtual meeting in January and selection of a venue outside of Gloucester (tbd) for the fall meeting.

COUNCIL ACTIONS

ATLANTIC HERRING – The Council received an overview of the 2025 [Atlantic Herring Research Track Assessment](#) (RTA) and peer review. Through this review, the primary assessment model was transitioned from ASAP to the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM); Dr. Micah Dean served on the RTA Working Group. The Council then reviewed recommendations on revising FY2025-2027 fishery specifications made by the Committee and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). The Council had taken final action on specifications in September, however (in January) requested the SSC consider updated FY2024 catch information made available through the RTA. The Council **approved revision of the FY2025-2027 Atlantic herring specifications based on updated catch information and revised projections, as follows: FY2025 Overfishing Limit (OFL) 20,802 mt, Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) 8,587 mt; FY2026 23,491 mt, ACB 13,165 mt; and FY2027 OFL 31,075 mt, ABC 13,165 mt.** The FY2026 & 2027 OFL and ABCs were held constant keeping with Committee recommendations. An amended motion to revise specifications as recommended by the SSC failed. The Council **approved that no unharvested catch will be carried over and added to any management to any management sub-ACL for the 2025 and 2026 fishing years.** The current 2025 Annual Catch Limit (ACL, in-season adjustment) is the lowest in the history of the management plan; revised specifications will increase the ACLs for FY2025-2027. To finalize the action, the Council **recommended the Proposed Action in Proposed Action and Changes from the Original Action** and **agreed to submit the 2025-2027 Atlantic herring specifications document to NOAA Fisheries as amended.** With this revision, the ASMFC reported that its Atlantic Herring Board will reconsider specifications at the Spring meeting. GARFO will work towards July implementation.

MANAGEMENT FLEXIBILITY OPTIONS – The Council's Executive Director raised immediate need for added flexibility in management in light of changing regional resources and capacity to support scientific updates and regulatory processes. She highlighted extreme uncertainty at the federal level, including for NOAA. The Council unanimously supported **substituting the approved 2025 work priority on Amendment 10 (A10) [to minimize user conflicts, achieve OY, and support rebuilding of the herring resource; River herring and shad management measures] with the following new 2025 priority: Develop an omnibus action to address management flexibility measures, including consideration of specifications frequency, rollover provisions, and in-season adjustment authority.** This substitution will pause work on A10 until the management flexibility action is completed. Extended specifications frequencies, adjustment to rollover provisions, and authority for in-season adjustment will be considered for all Fishery Management Plans (FMPs). The Council will investigate how other regional councils are addressing these issues. Final action is expected in fall/winter to have provisions in place for FY2026 across plans.

ON-DEMAND GEAR MARKING FRAMEWORK – The Council **initiated the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Council Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment** (12/1/4). This action will revise surface gear marking regulations across FMPs to allow for on-demand gear to be used in these fisheries. The [MAFMC](#) passed a similar motion last week. For New England, the Omnibus action will revise the Northeast Multispecies and Deep-Sea Red Crab FMPs; Joint frameworks will be developed for Monkfish and Spiny Dogfish FMPs; the Mid-Atlantic will address Black Sea Bass and Scup. In addition to regulations for Council-managed species (under CFR section 648), the action will revise lobster gear marking regulations under the Atlantic Coast Act (CFR section 697). Several Council members expressed reservation with the process regarding opportunity for ASMFC to engage. Final action is anticipated in the fall (Sept NEFMC; Oct MAFMC) with an update to ASMFC planned in October.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH) FRAMEWORK – The New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils have recently completed a 5-year review of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) designations for the Councils' FMPs. The NEFMC **initiated the 2025 Framework to the Atlantic herring, Northeast Multispecies, Monkfish, and Skate FMPs** and defined the

Problem Statement and one objective for the action. Current EFH designations are based on data through 2005 and may not reflect current habitat use by Council-managed species. The EFH Framework will revise text descriptions and maps for all life history stages for the 10 species under the three FMPs. Final approval is expected in September.

MONKFISH & SKATE SPECIFICATIONS – As scheduled, the Council initiated **Framework Adjustment 17 to the Monkfish FMP to set specifications for FY2026-2028, including consideration of changes in days-at-sea and possession limits**. The Council also received an overview of joint coordination planned for 2025 between Monkfish and Skate bodies (PDTs, Advisory Panels, and Committees). Every six years, specifications actions for monkfish and skates align, as they do in 2025. Better understanding of the overlap and constraints particularly within the related gillnet sector will help support development of effort control alternatives to improve efficiency and quota use in both fisheries. The Council will also consider this work in advancing its IRA initiative for holistic management across FMPs. In 2025, FY2026-2027 Skate Specifications will be developed for the seven-species complex.

UPDATES & DISCUSSION

RISK POLICY – The Council participated in an exercise applying the new Risk Policy's factor weighting at the global level (across all FMPs) and individual FMP level using test cases of Atlantic sea scallops and Gulf of Maine haddock. Results demonstrated the influence of factor-weighting (a Council policy choice) when applied to the pre-determined factor scores (objective, scored by PDT using a rubric). How weightings affect risk versus precaution was discussed. Selected factors consider stock status and uncertainty, climate and ecosystem considerations, and economic and community importance. Simulation testing of the Risk Policy, in conjunction with groundfish harvest control rules, has been contracted to the UMaine and is expected to begin soon. Future work involves integrating factor scoring with ecosystem information (e.g., from the State of the Ecosystem report for New England).

GROUNDFISH – Staff provided updates on several Northeast Multispecies work priorities including metrics developed for the Amendment 23 monitoring system review, to ensure the program is providing accurate catch information necessary to manage the fishery; a final list will be presented in June. The Council continues to revise its groundfish ABC Control Rule (Framework 68) with near-term simulation testing planned (UMaine contract noted above); implementation of a final control rule is anticipated in 2027. Additionally, this year, the Council reviews its Redfish Exemption Program.

NEFSC FISHERY MONITORING & RESEARCH – NEFSC staff reviewed observer sea-day accomplishments, at-sea monitoring spend plan and contracts, electronic monitoring program changes, and safety at-sea improvements.

SECTOR OBSERVER COVERAGE RATES – Hank Soule, Sector Manager and NEFSC staff provided details on sector coverage target and realized rates, waiver issuance, and compliance factors.

SEA SCALLOPS – Staff summarized recent Scallop Visioning Sessions held to support development of a long-term [Scallop Strategic Plan](#). The Scallop RTA will be peer reviewed next week in Woods Hole. The final rule for [Framework 39](#), FY2025 specifications, was approved on April 18 and will become effective on April 21st. Staff noted a high number of boats participating in the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) fishery which opened April 1st (under default measures). NOAA Fisheries has recommended eight projects for Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program funding that support applied research to inform fisheries management: [2025 Scallop RSA Program announcement](#).

STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM – NEFSC staff summarized the 2025 SOE report; the SSC offered a review.

CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE – David Whaley, legislative liaison for the eight Councils, provided insights on the current federal landscape within Congress regarding fisheries and ocean policy priorities and budget development.

AGENCY ACTIVITIES – Written reports from the [Council Executive Director](#), [GARFO](#), [NEFSC](#), [MAFMC](#), and [USCG](#).

LOOKING AHEAD

At the June Council meeting, the Council is expected to:

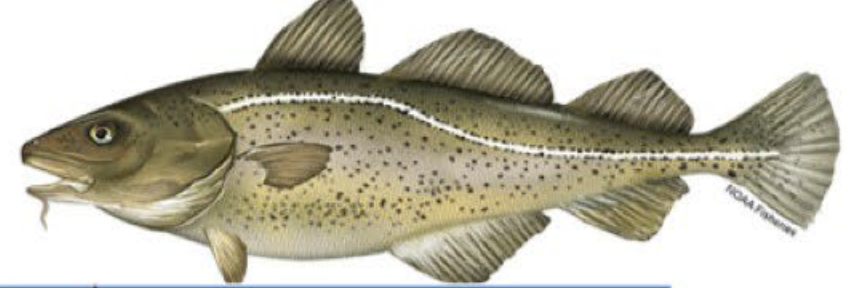
- Initiate a framework to set specifications for many groundfish stocks for FY2026-2028
- Initiate a spiny dogfish framework joint with MAFMC to revise accountability measures to address discards
- Receive the 2025 Atlantic Scallop Research Track Assessment and initiate a FY2026 specifications action
- Approve a public outreach document and schedule for the Scallop Strategic Plan
- See the Council's [Three Meeting Outlook](#) and [nefmc.org](#) for updates.

New England Regional Fishery Updates



- January & April Summary
- June Agenda



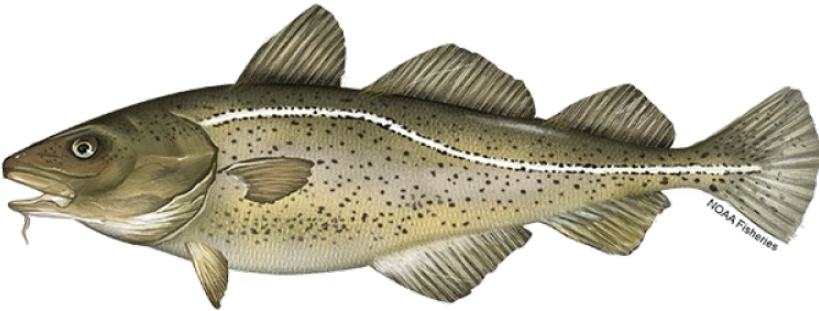


Recreational Groundfish

	FY2025 sub-ACL (mt)	Proposed Minimum Size	Proposed Possession Limit	Proposed Season
EGOM Cod	N/A	23"	1	May 1-31, Sep 1 – Oct 31
WGOM Cod	99	23"	1	May 1-31, Sep 1 – Oct 31
GOM haddock	1,075 (42% ↑)	17" 18"	15	May 1 – Feb 28; Apr 1-30
SNE Cod	11	ZERO POSSESSION		
GB Cod	N/A	23"	1	May 1-31, Sep 1 – Oct 31



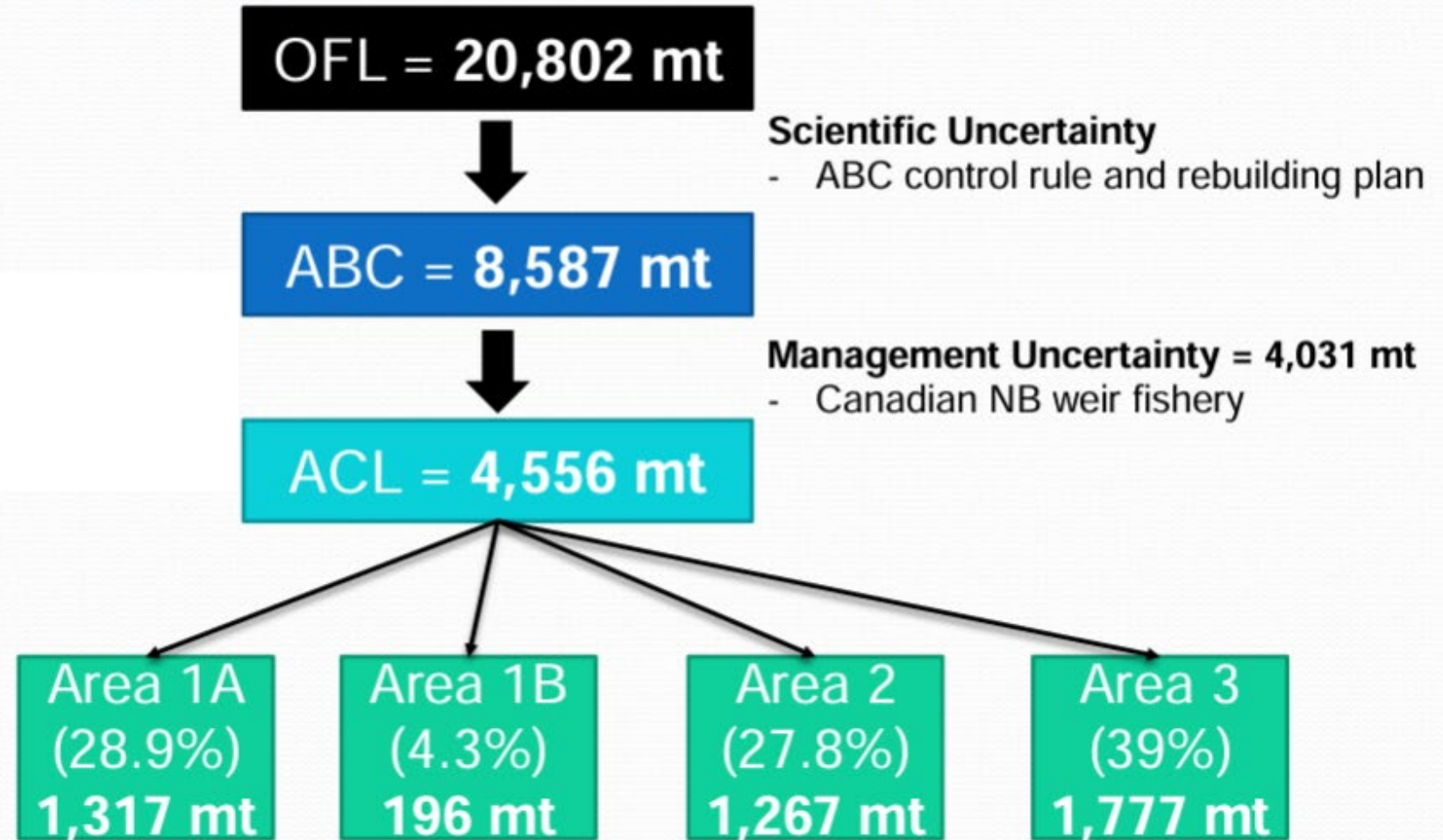
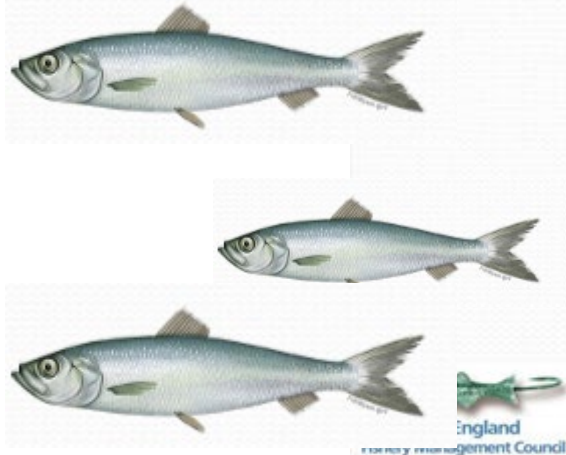
Groundfish



- **Amendment 25 – May 5**
(two to four cod stocks)
- **FW 69**
(revised specifications for FY2025-2027)
- **Recreational GOM cod/haddock**
- **DMF/Northeast Seafood Coalition**
Exempted Fishery Permit - April 28



Atlantic Herring



Management Priority Updates

- EFH 5-year Review
- Risk Policy →
- On Demand Gear Conflict

Factor	<i>Least Important</i> 0	<i>Slightly Important</i> 1	<i>Important</i> 2	<i>Highly Important</i> 3	<i>Critically Important</i> 4
Biomass/Stock					
Recruitment					
Assessment Type & Uncertainty					
Climate Vulnerability					
Fish Condition					
Recreational Fishery Characterization					
Commercial Fishery Characterization					



Other Council & Federal Activity

- Reprioritization to pursue management flexibility options
- Meeting changes
- Scientific Concerns
- Executive Order on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness



June Agenda



Questions?



Eelgrass Trends and Restoration in Massachusetts

**Forest Schenck
Habitat Program
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
4/24/2025
Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission**

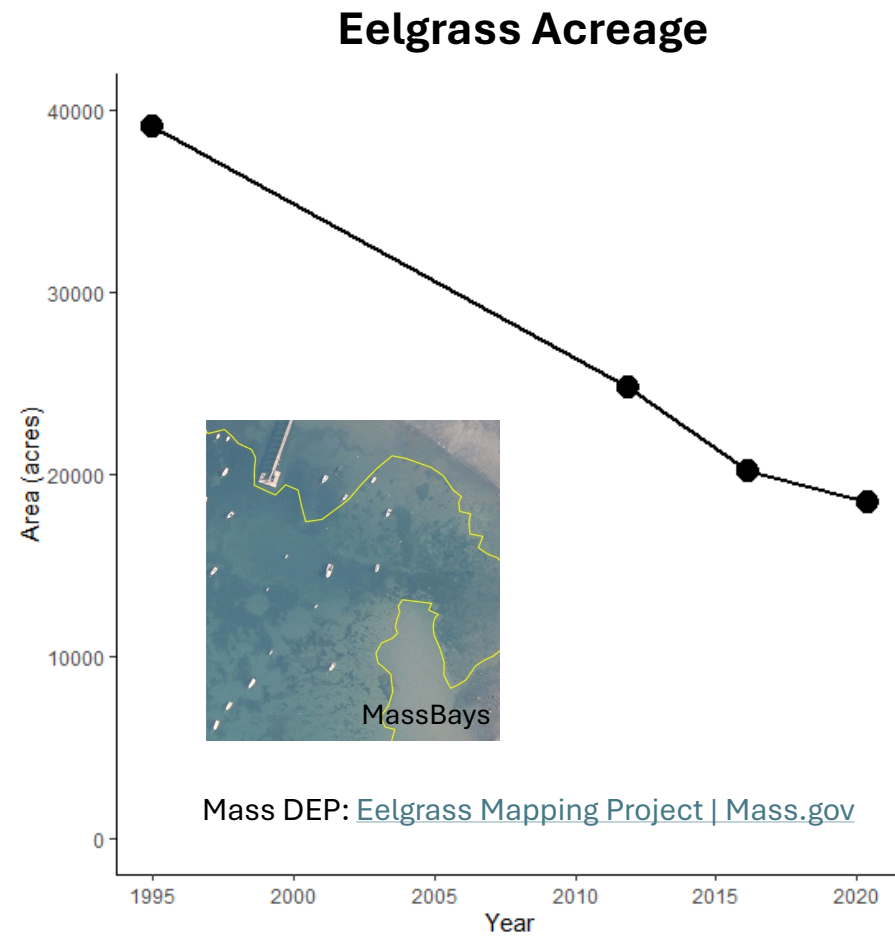
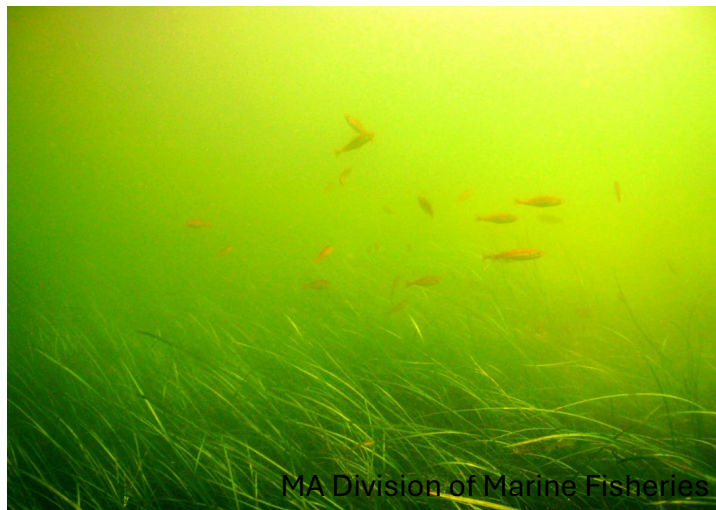


Outline

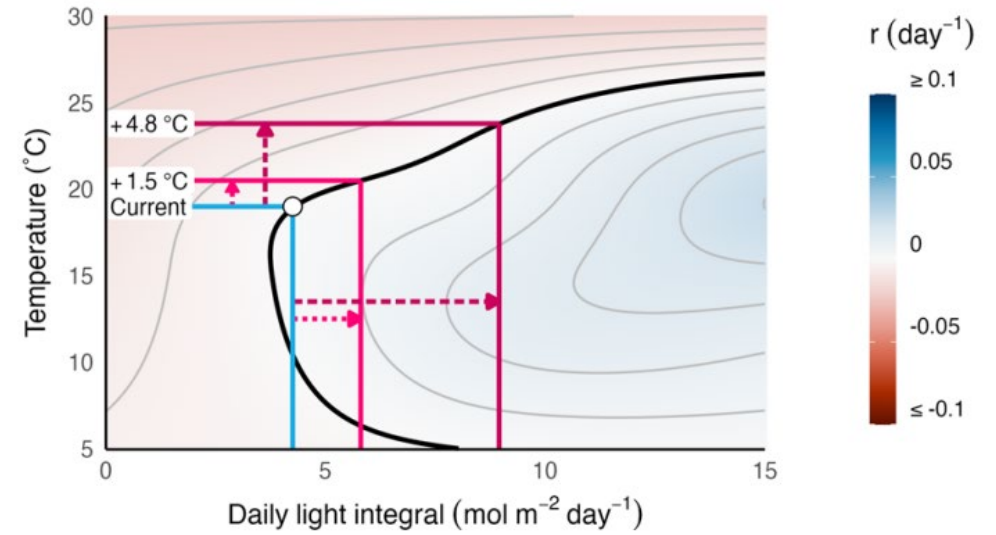
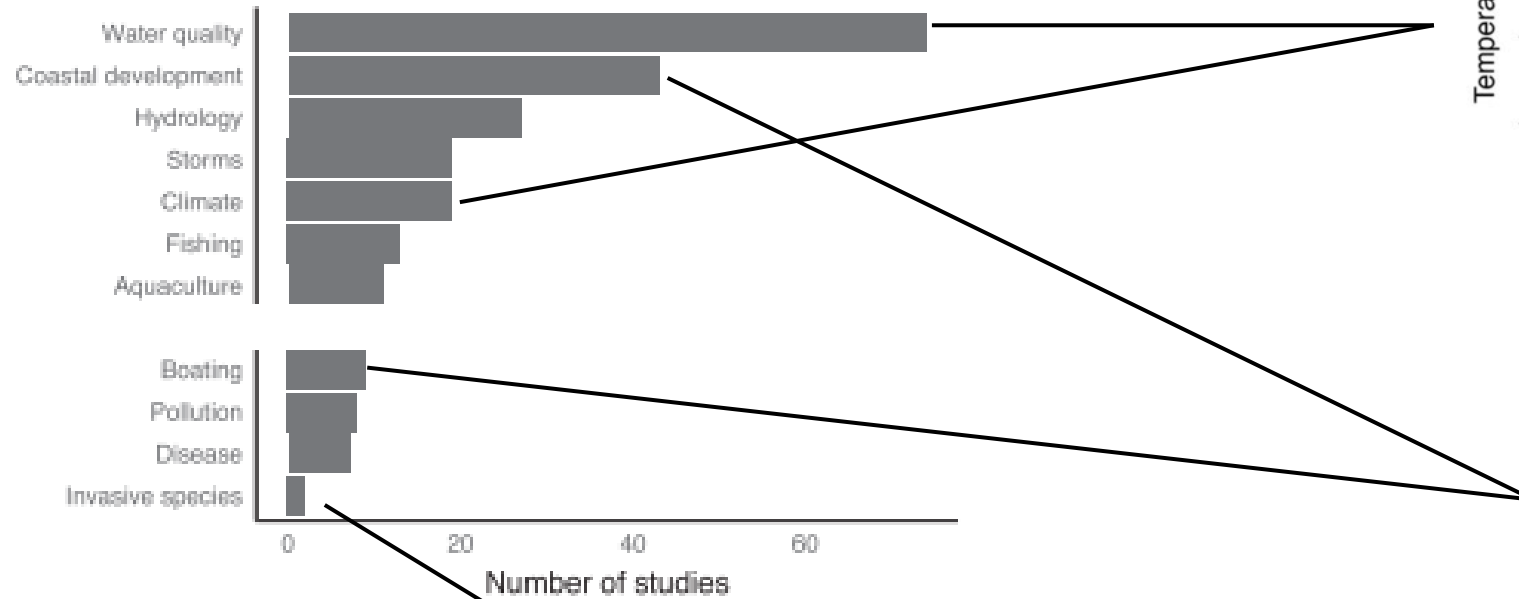
- What and why eelgrass?
- Current trends and key stressors
- History of restoration in MA
- Seed based restoration (hope and challenges)
- Looking forward



Eelgrass is fish habitat

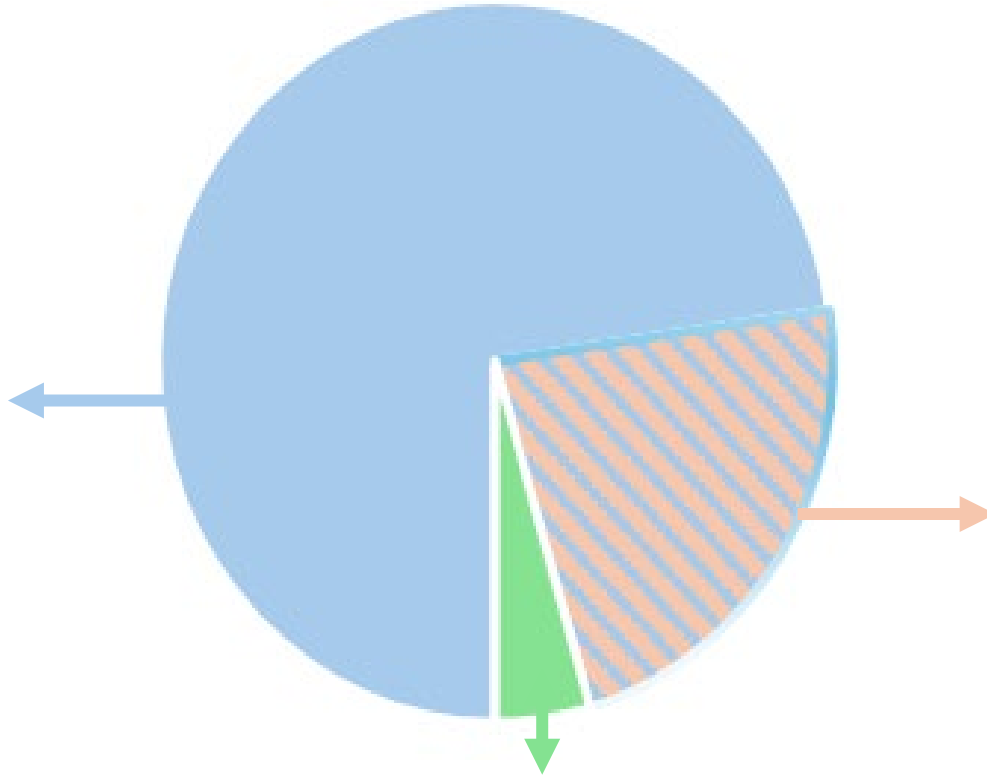


Why is eelgrass declining?



How has eelgrass been restored in Massachusetts?

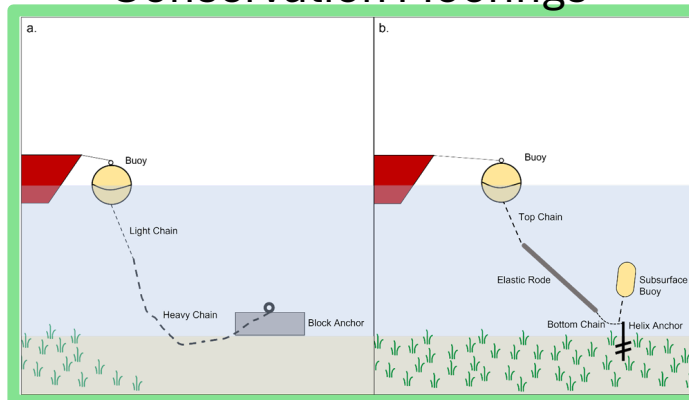
Vegetative Transplants



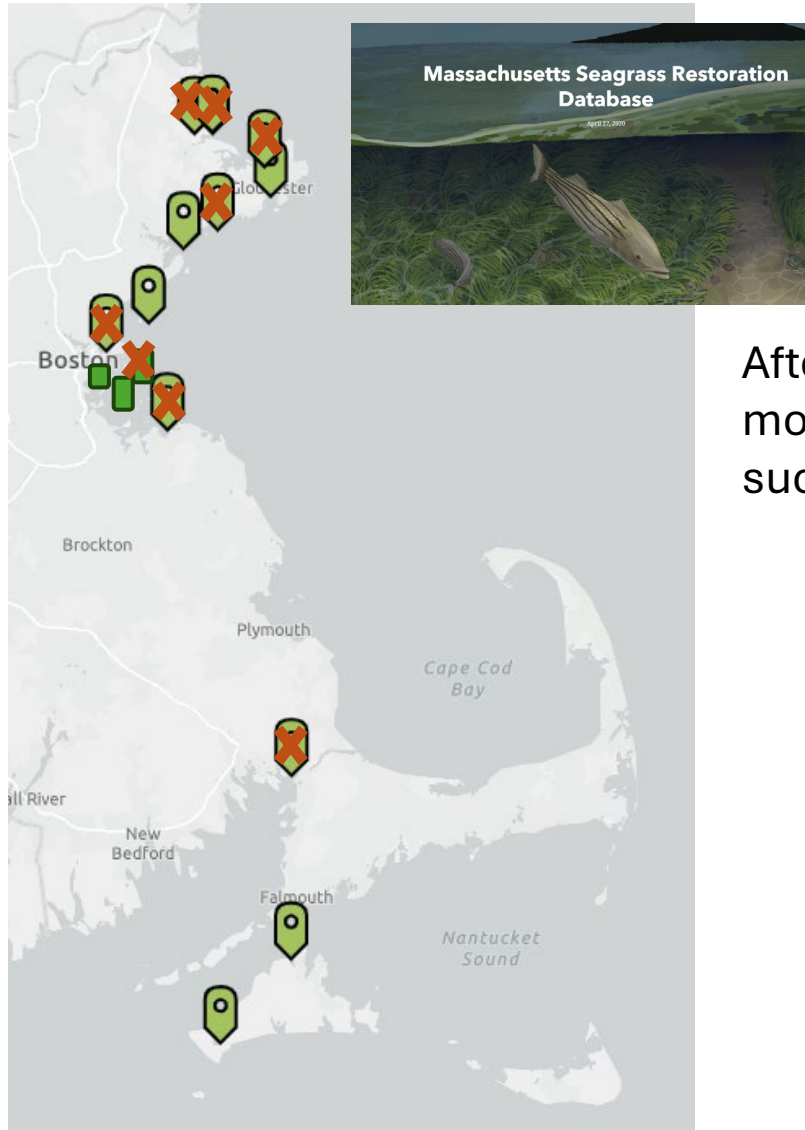
Seeding



Conservation Moorings

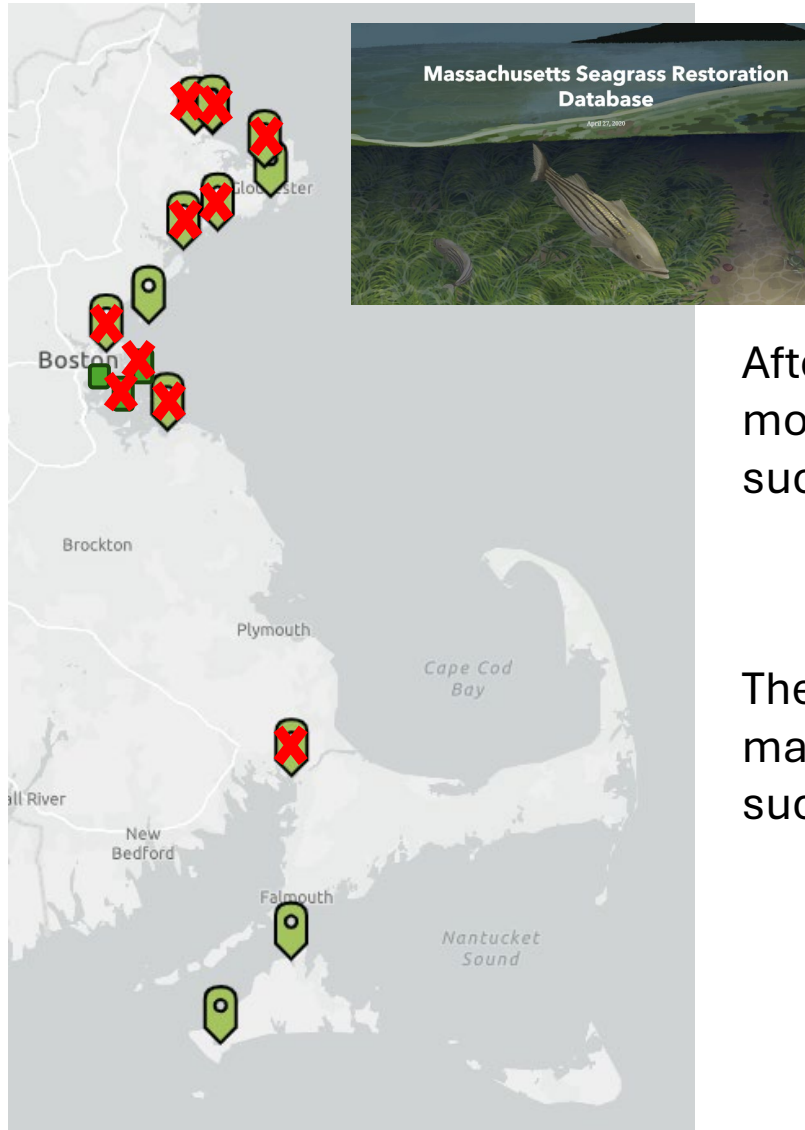


How has eelgrass restoration been going statewide?



After completion of
monitoring (2-5yrs): 47%
success rate

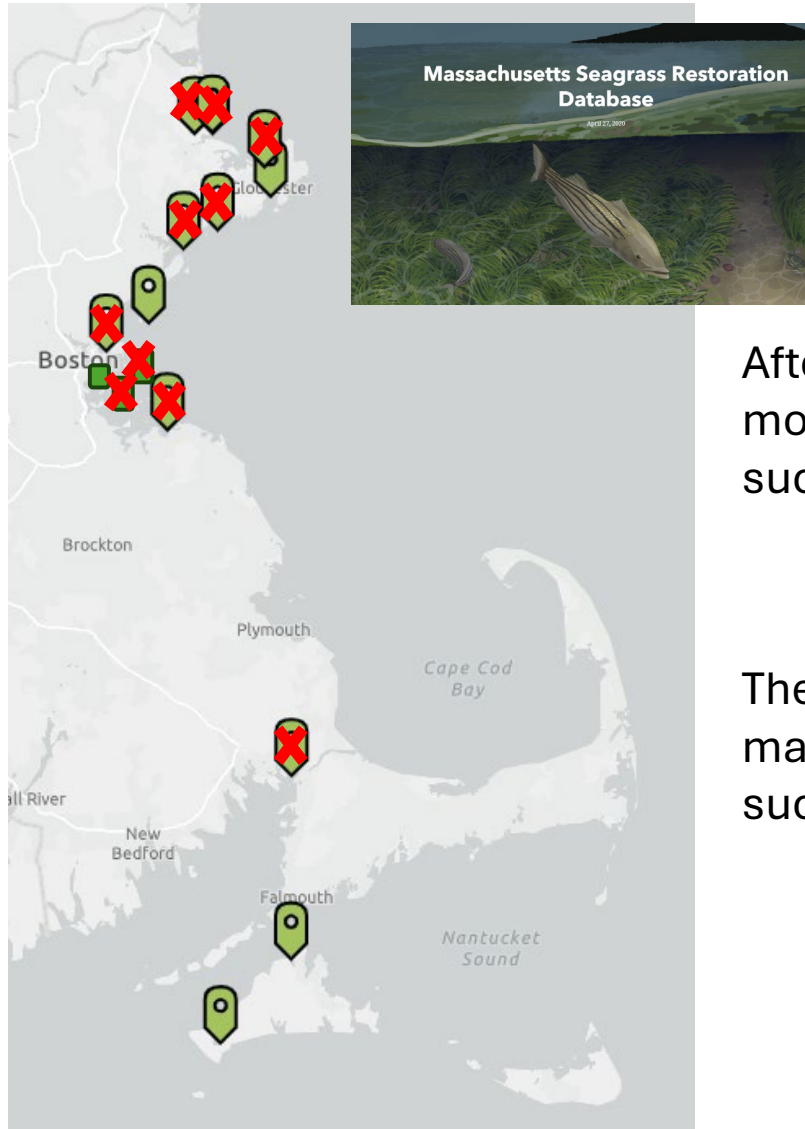
How has eelgrass restoration been going statewide?



After completion of
monitoring (2-5yrs): 47%
success rate

The most recent MassDEP
mapping efforts: 24%
success rate

How has eelgrass restoration been going statewide?



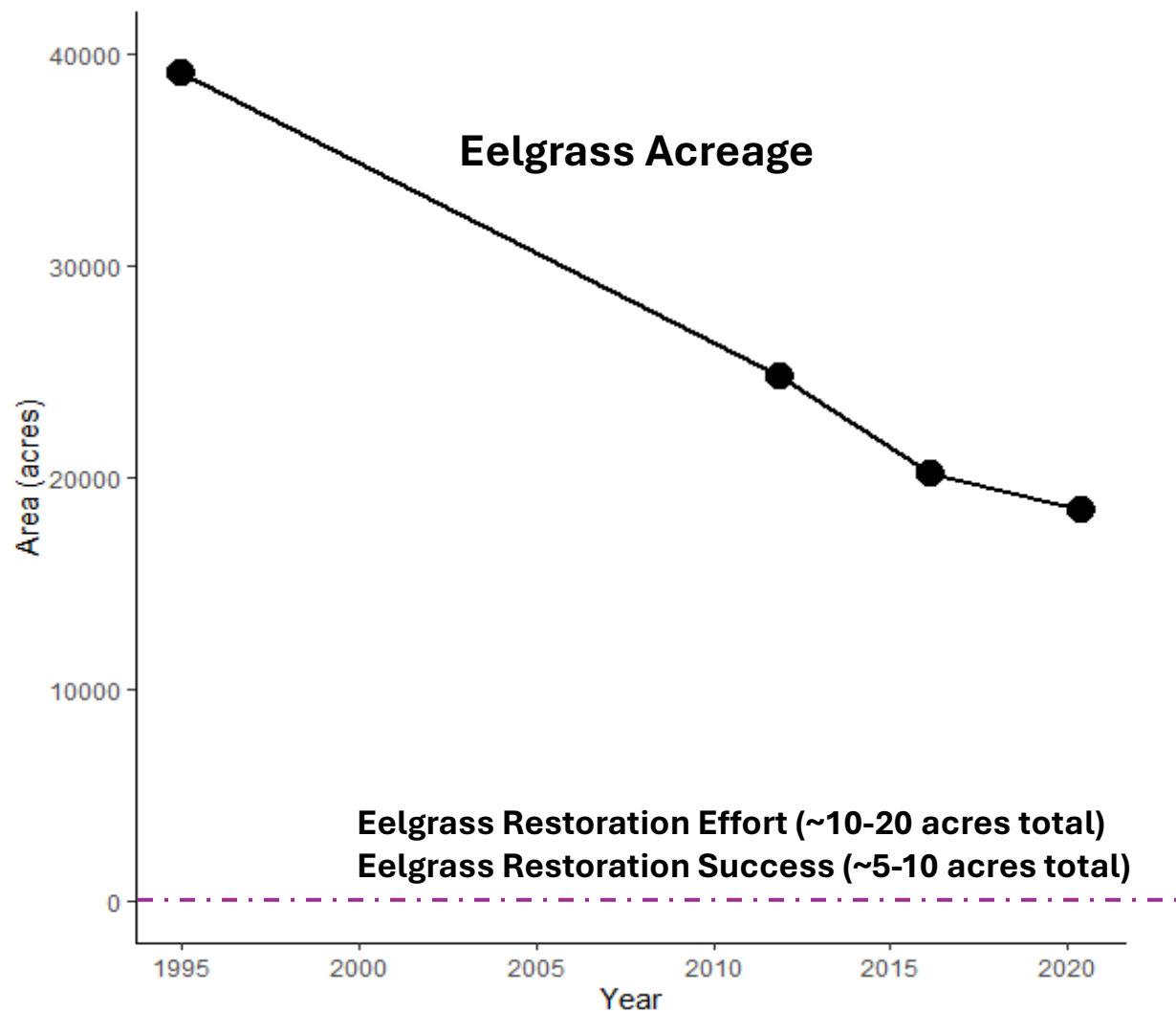
After completion of monitoring (2-5yrs): 47% success rate

The most recent MassDEP mapping efforts: 24% success rate

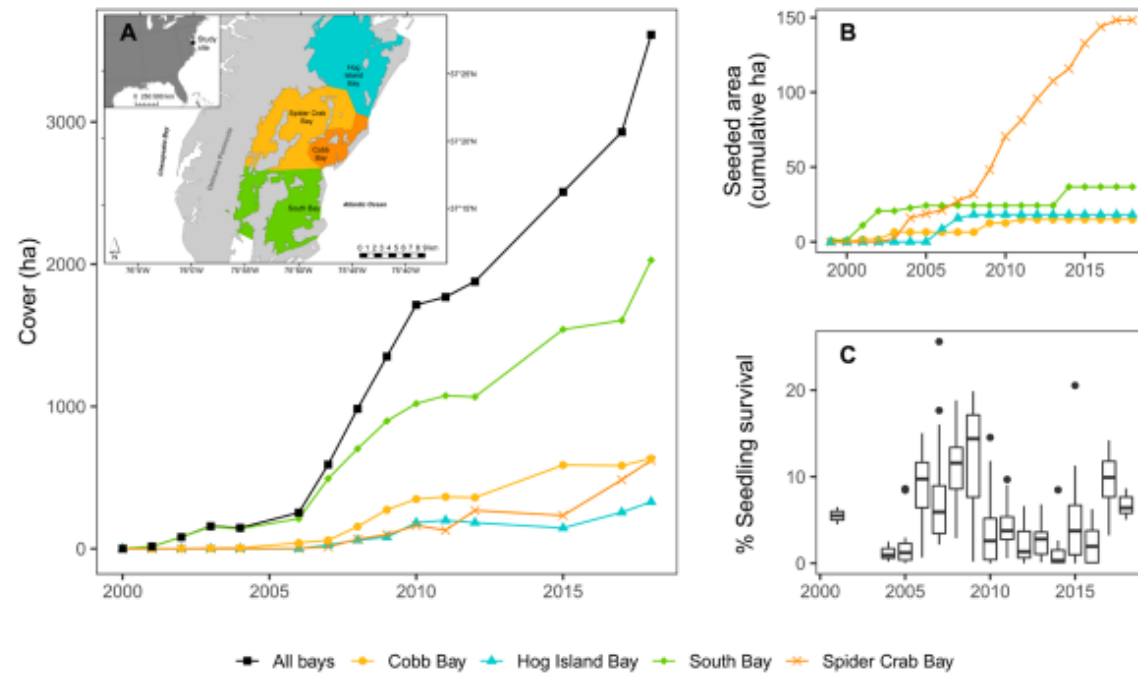
What about acreage??

- We've planted ~10-20 acres of eelgrass in MA since the 90's
- ~5-10 acres of restored eelgrass are present in MassDEP's maps

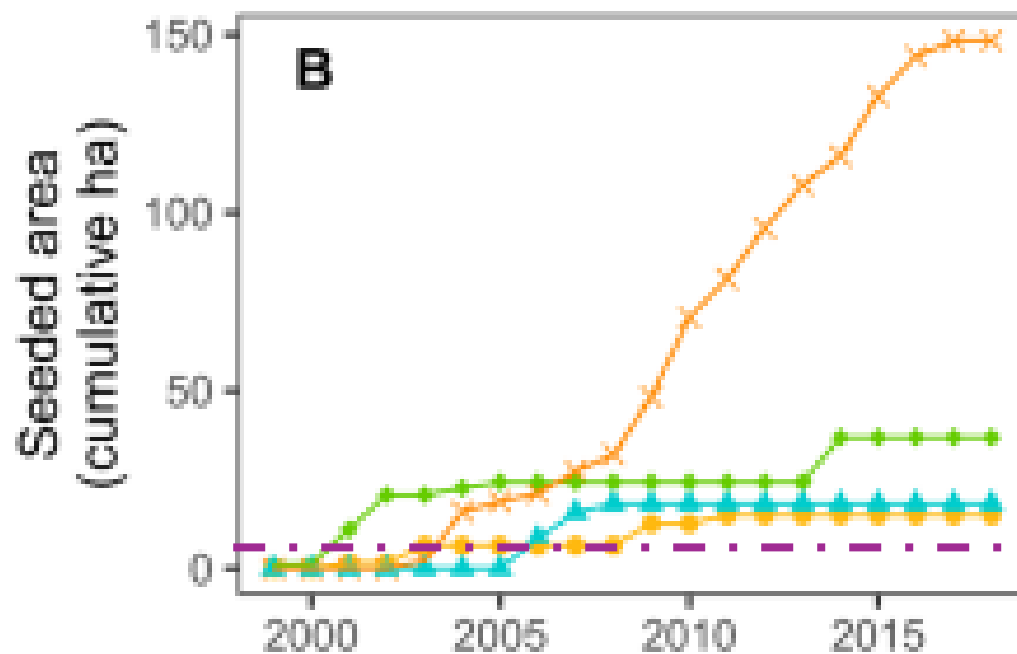
How does restoration effort compare to trends in eelgrass habitat statewide?



Seed-based restoration aka: 'turning up the restoration tap'

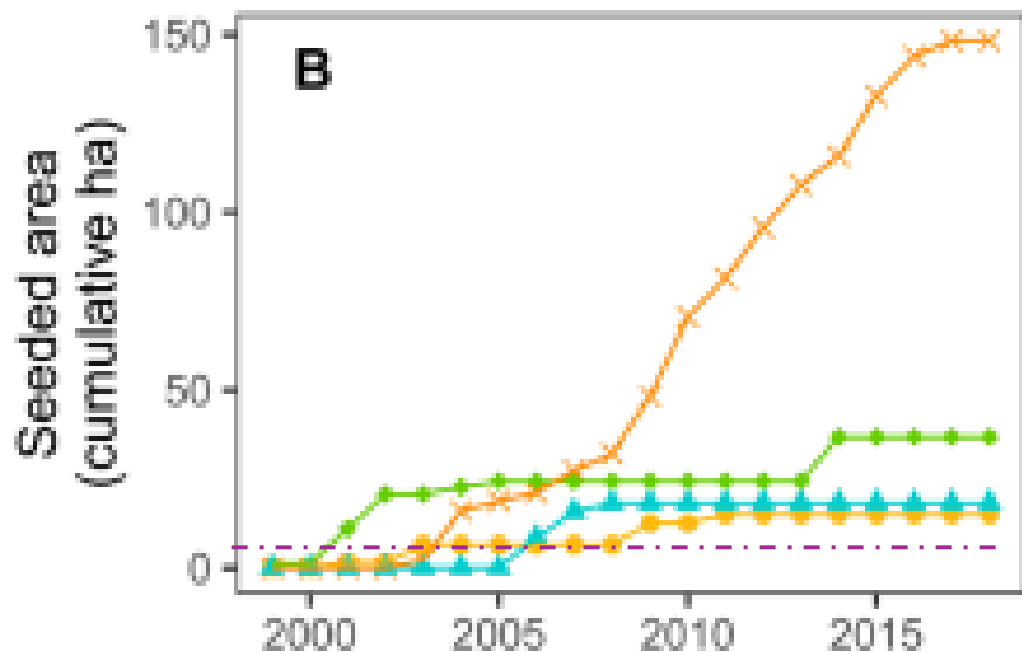


Seed-based restoration aka: 'turning up the restoration tap'



**MA Eelgrass
Restoration Effort**

Seed-based restoration aka: 'turning up the restoration tap'



**MA Eelgrass
Restoration Effort**



NEIWPCC and Long Island Sound Study National Estuary Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Initiate and Develop a Long-Term and Large-Scale Eelgrass Seed Dispersal Restoration Program

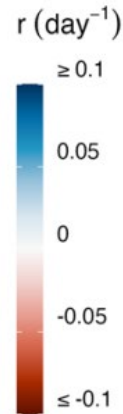
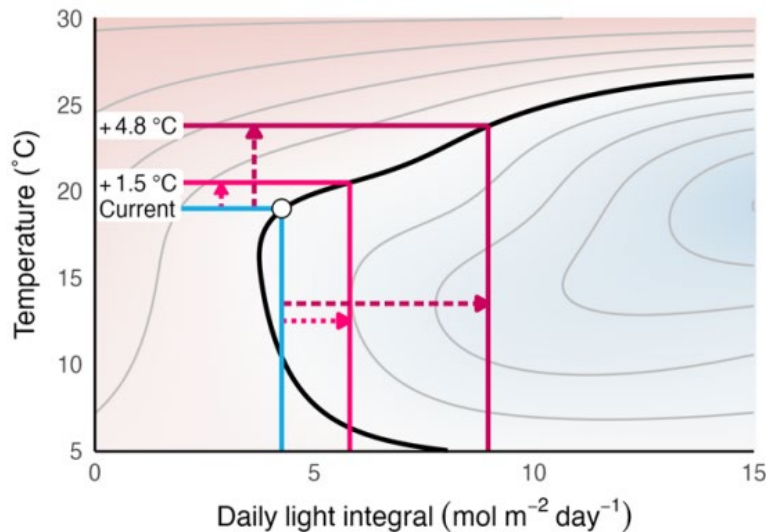
January 2025



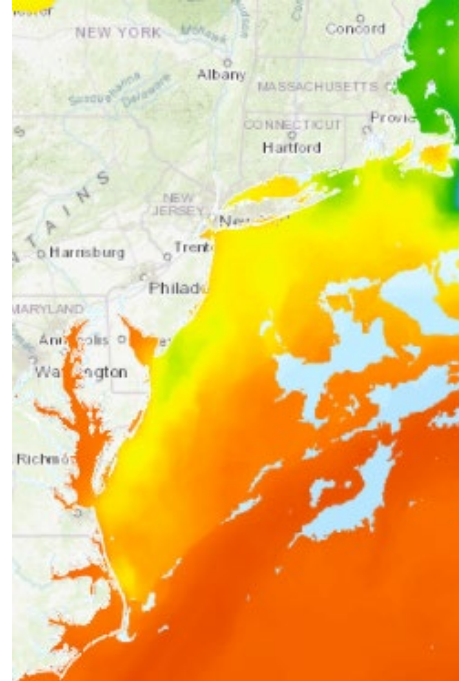
Will turning up the tap be enough?



We must address the underlying reasons why eelgrass is absent from the areas where we are attempting to restore



Seed-based restoration may offer a means to address climate-driven declines in MA



A Collective Effort to Help Eelgrass Adapt to Climate Change

To save carbon-storing seagrass in Long Island, researchers look to genetic research on trees.

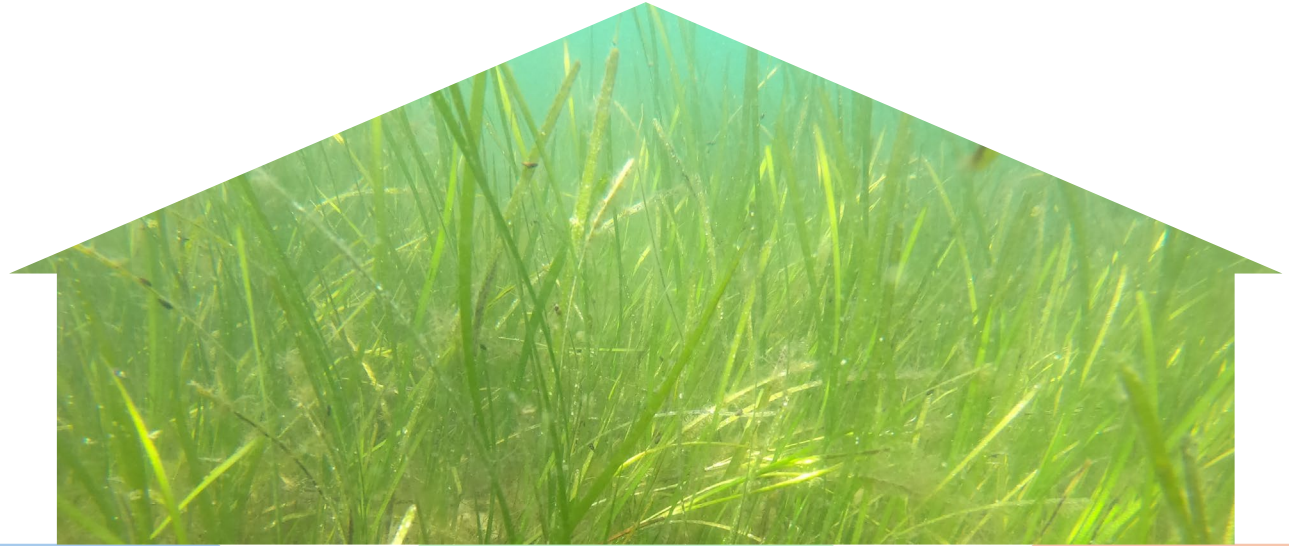
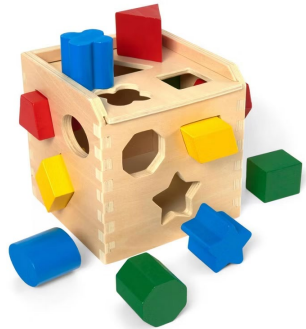
December 14, 2022 | Last updated November 30, 2023

A framework for future eelgrass conservation in MA

Continue to avoid
and minimize
impacts to
eelgrass



Recognize the 'business
as usual' approach is not
sufficient to address
eelgrass loss in MA



Education and
Training



Technical Guidance and
Regional Coordination



Applied
Research

Thank you

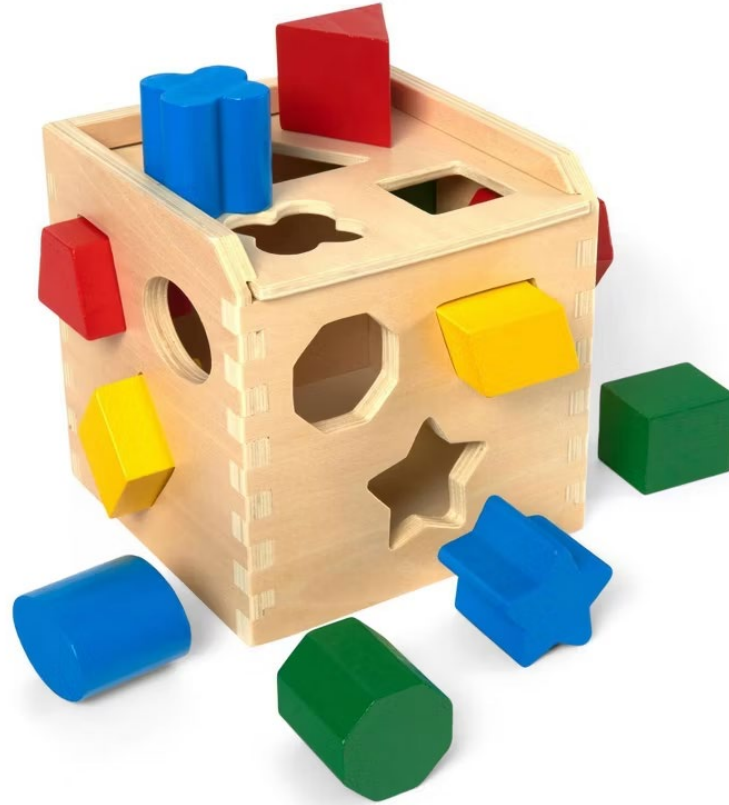
forest.schenck@mass.gov



What is the Path Forward?

Mitigation

- Small area
- Short timeline
- Risk averse
- \$



Restoration

- Large area
- Long timeline
- Risk tolerant
- \$\$\$

What is the Path Forward?



Mitigation

- Small area
- Short timeline
- Risk averse
- \$

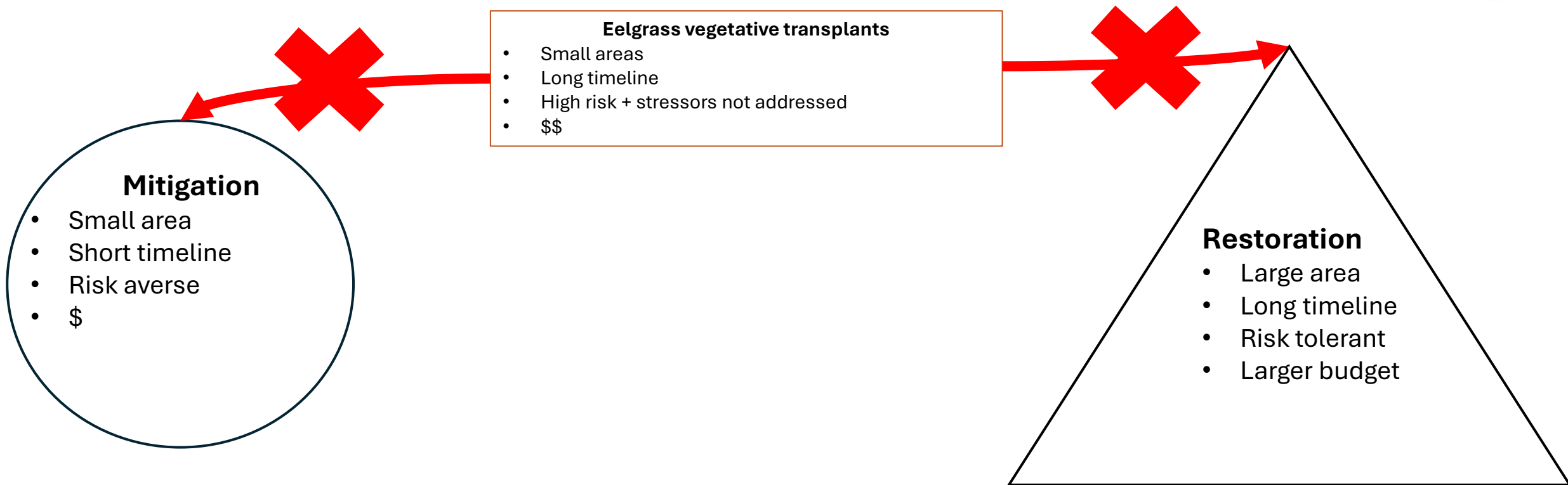
Eelgrass vegetative transplants

- Small areas
- Long timeline
- High risk + stressors not addressed
- \$\$

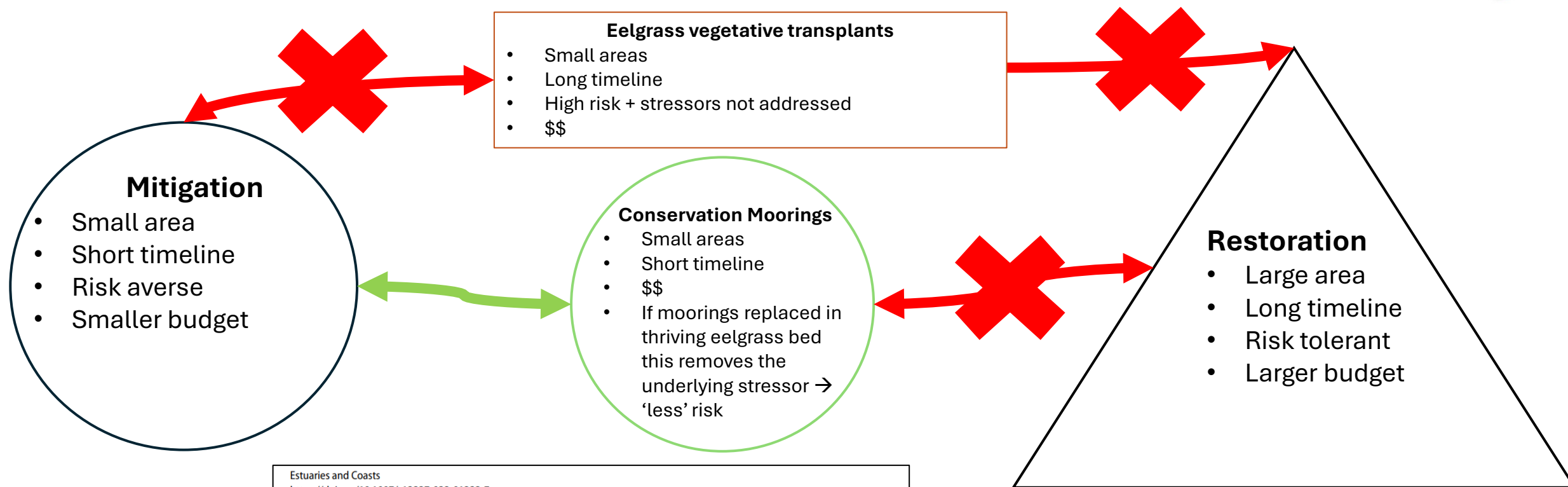
Restoration

- Large area
- Long timeline
- Risk tolerant
- Larger budget

What is the Path Forward?



What is the Path Forward?

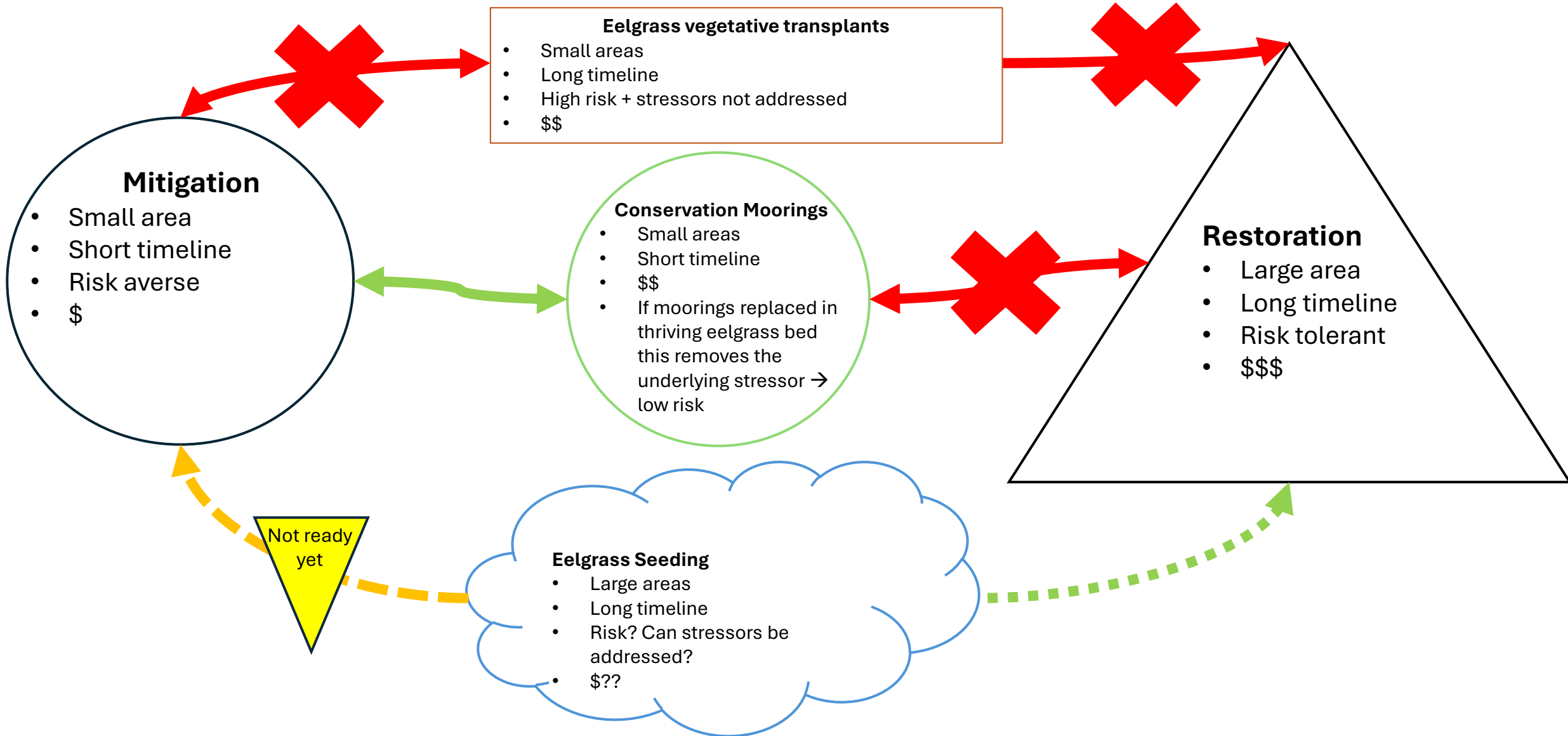


Estuaries and Coasts
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12237-023-01322-7>

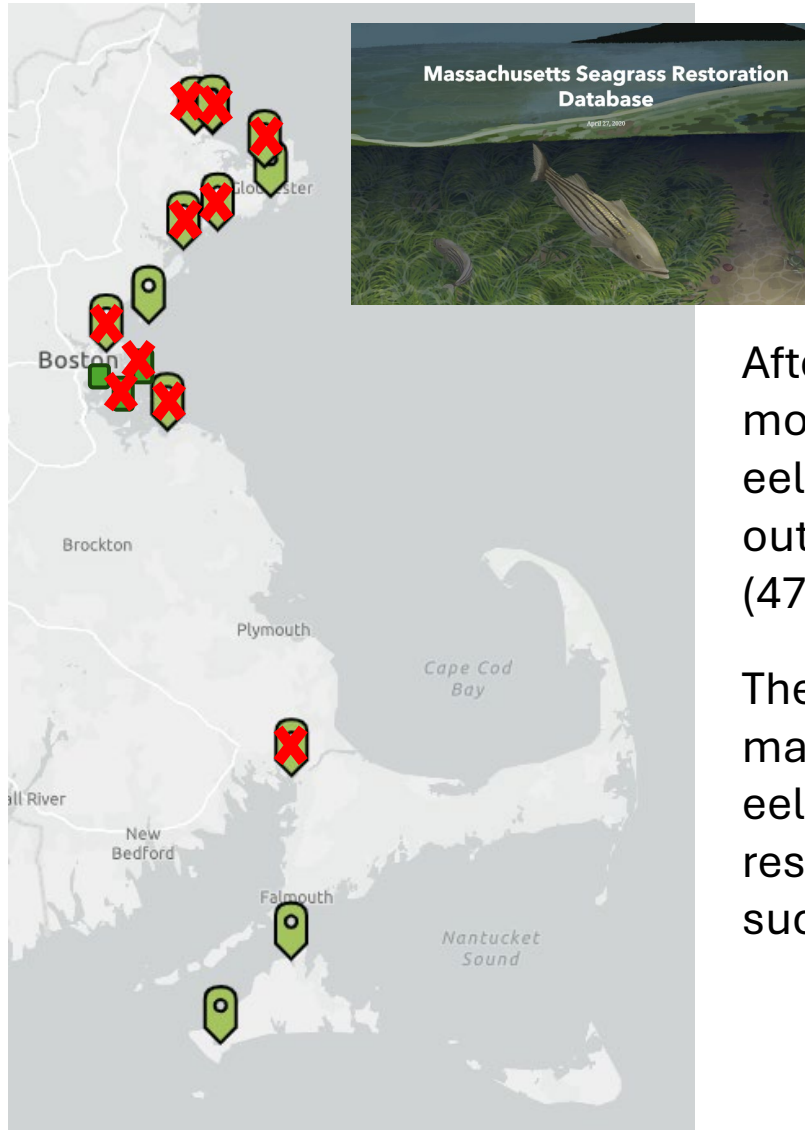
Recovery of Eelgrass *Zostera marina* Following Conversion of Conventional Chain Moorings to Conservation Mooring Systems in Massachusetts: Context-Dependence, Challenges, and Management

Iris Seto¹ · N. Tay Evans² · Jillian Carr³ · Kate Frew¹ · Mark Rousseau¹ · Forest R. Schenck¹

What is the Path Forward?



How has eelgrass restoration been going?



After completion of monitoring (2-5yrs) eelgrass was present 10 out of 21 restoration sites (47% success rate)

The most recent MassDEP mapping efforts detected eelgrass in only 5 of 21 restoration sites (24% success rate)

What about acreage??

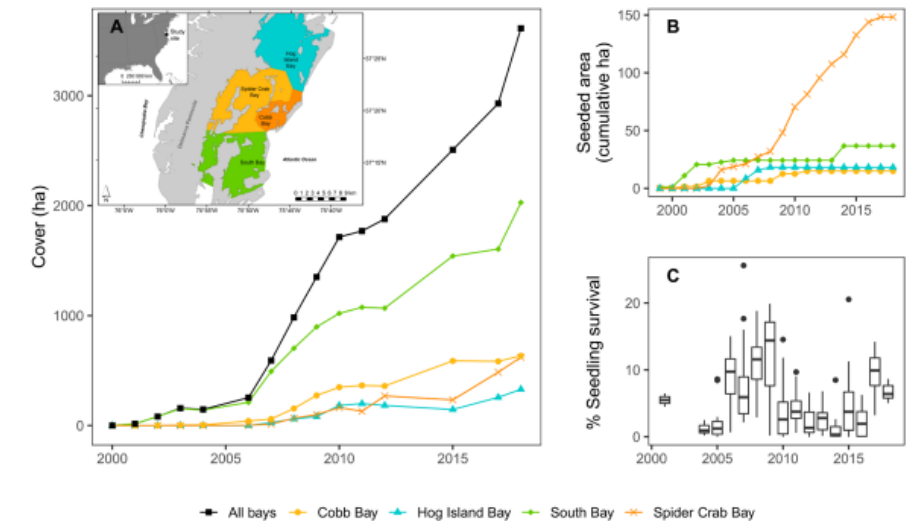
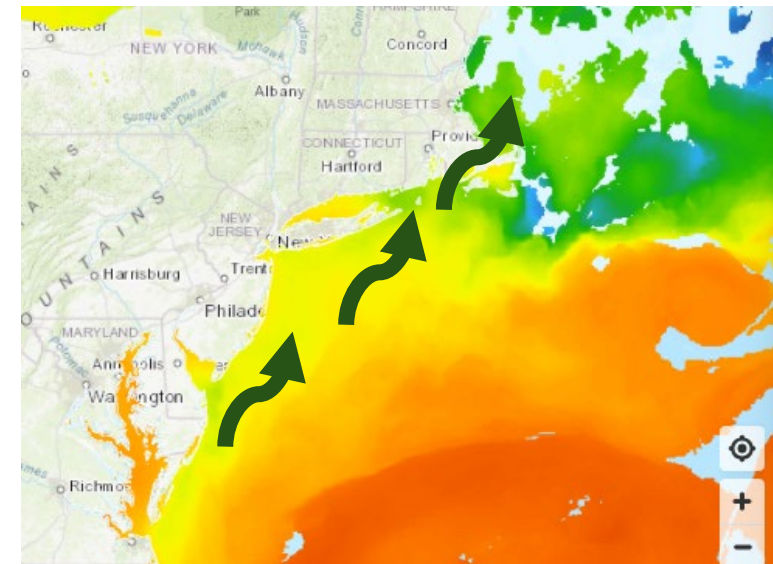
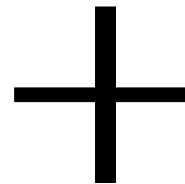
- We've planted ~10-20 acres of eelgrass in MA since the 90's
- ~5-10 acres of restored eelgrass are present in MassDEP's maps

A bit more on seed-based restoration

- Precedent for sustaining large scale and long-term effort



- But can it address the major underlying stressors in MA (water quality and temperature), but the recent science suggests it could:



“Prior exposure to disturbance or stress can promote population persistence, whereas populations from benign sites may be highly vulnerable to changing conditions.”

“... managers might need to consider using multivariate data to match donor sites to restoration sites, or alternatively obtain [eelgrass] from a wide variety of sites to ensure adequate genetic diversity.”

What is holding eelgrass restoration back in MA

- If eelgrass is not present in MA the reason is likely not that it can't get there on its own
- To restore eelgrass the reason(s) for its absence must be addressed
 - Recreational boating and fishing practices (moorings, docks, hydraulic clamming)
 - *Preventative solutions:* remove/reduce physical/shading impacts
 - *Restoration solutions:* N/A
 - Bioturbators (Crustaceans are king)
 - *Preventative solutions:* N/A
 - *Restoration solutions:* Restoration methods (seeding vs. vegetative transplants)
 - Water quality declines (lawn fertilizers, waste-water outfalls, hardened landscapes), increasing ocean temperature, sea level rise, and increased storm frequency and intensity
 - *Preventative solutions:* improve waste-water treatment and reduce fertilizer use, reduce carbon emissions
 - ***Restoration solutions:* use eelgrass better adapted to 'new' baseline conditions**

Eelgrass DEP MAP

LETTER

Conservation Letters
A Journal of the Society for Conservation Biology

WILEY

Management thresholds shift under the influence of multiple stressors: Eelgrass meadows as a case study

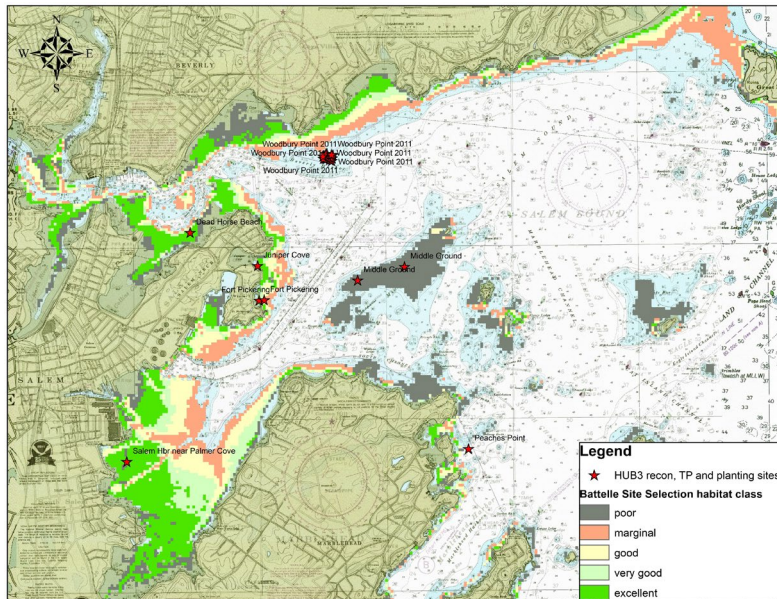
Jillian C. Dunic  | Isabelle M. Côté 



What does a 'typical' eelgrass restoration look like?

Case Study: Middle Ground Salem, MA

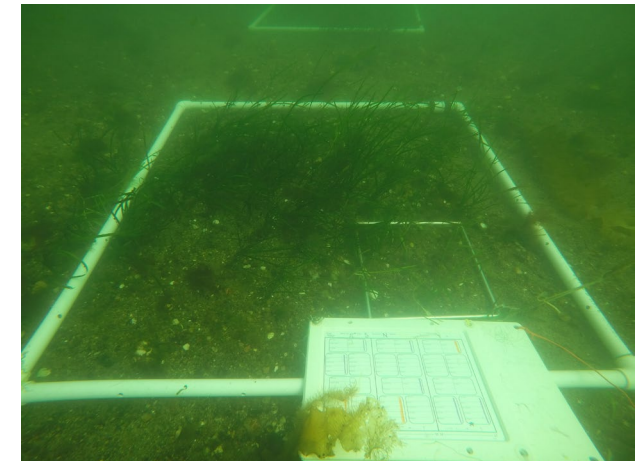
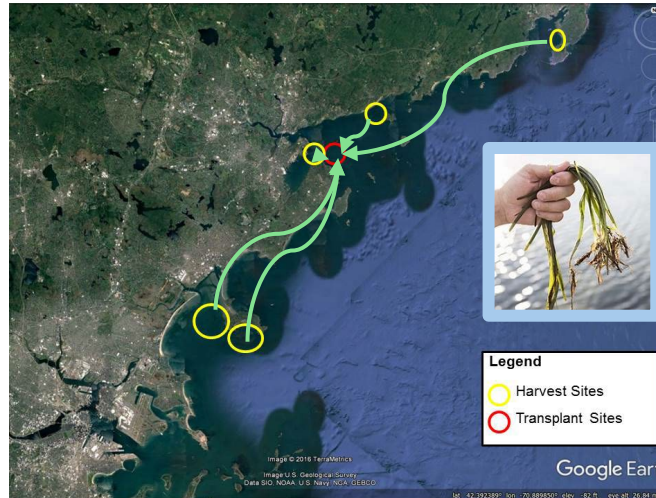
Step 1: Site Selection and Test plots (~3 yrs)



Step 2: Planting (~2 yrs)



Step 3: Monitoring (2-5 yrs)



Regulatory barriers to eelgrass restoration in MA

1. Greater ease in using:

- (a) donor sites from a wider geographic range and
- (b) a greater number of donor sites could increase restoration success in certain contexts

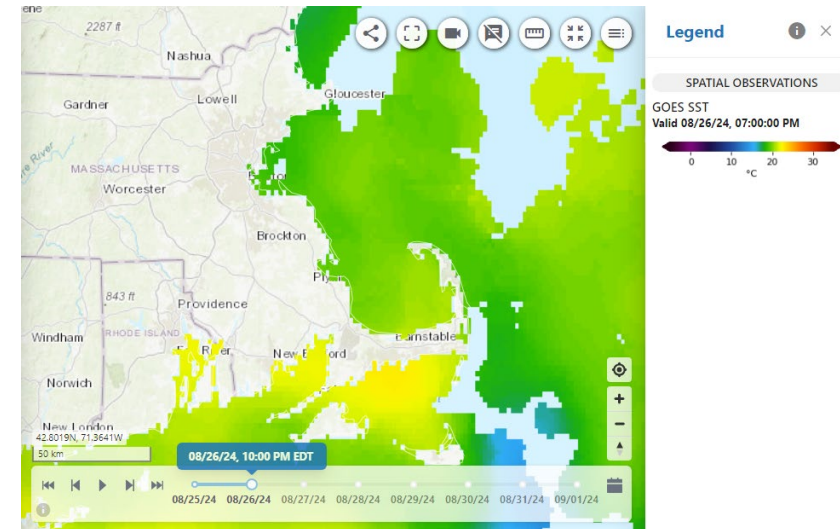


“Prior exposure to disturbance or stress can promote population persistence, whereas populations from benign sites may be highly vulnerable to changing conditions.”

“... managers might need to consider using multivariate data to match donor sites to restoration sites, or alternatively obtain [eelgrass] from a wide variety of sites to ensure adequate genetic diversity.”

2. Lack of a statewide eelgrass restoration database

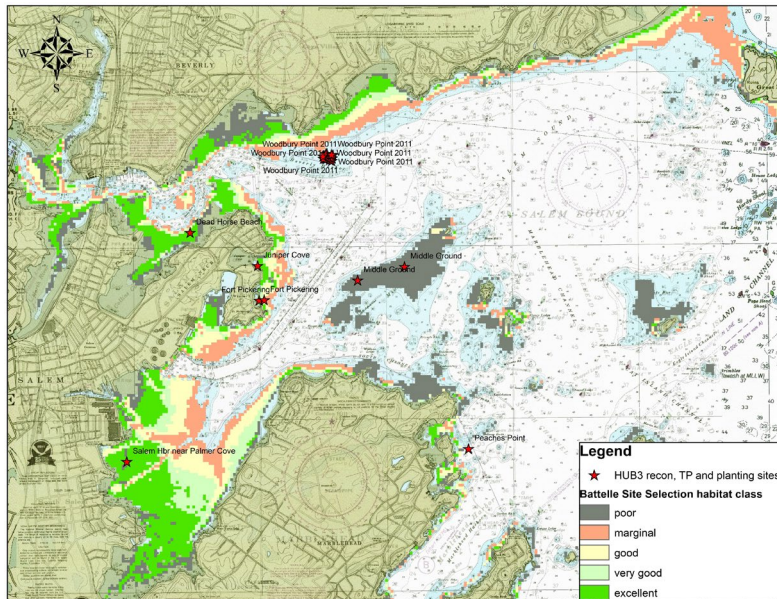
‘Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it’



What does a 'typical' eelgrass restoration look like?

Case Study: Middle Ground Salem, MA

Step 1: Site Selection and Test plots (~3 yrs)

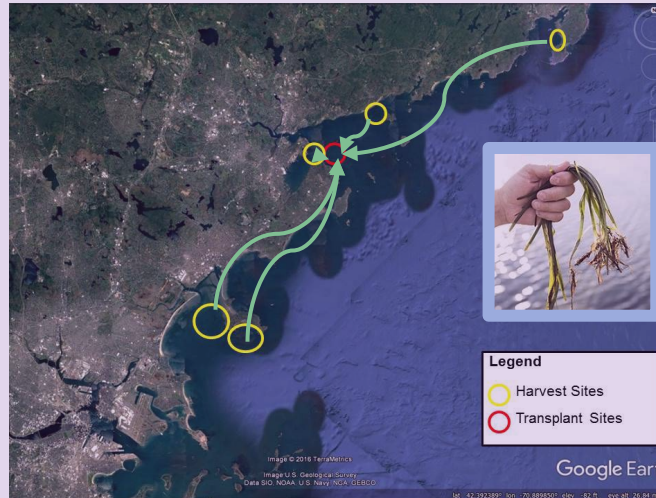
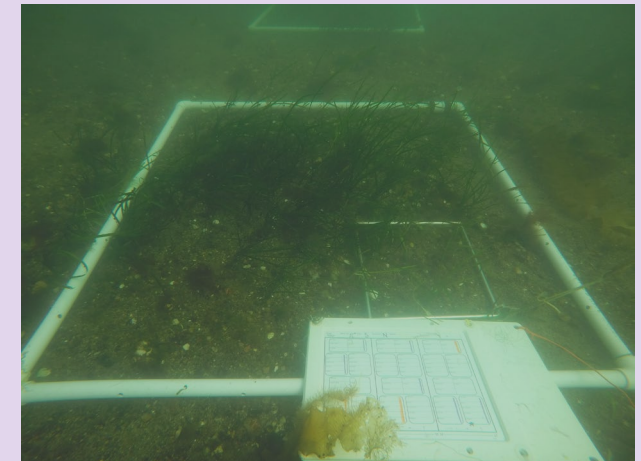


Step 2: Planting (~2 yrs)



\$300,000.00

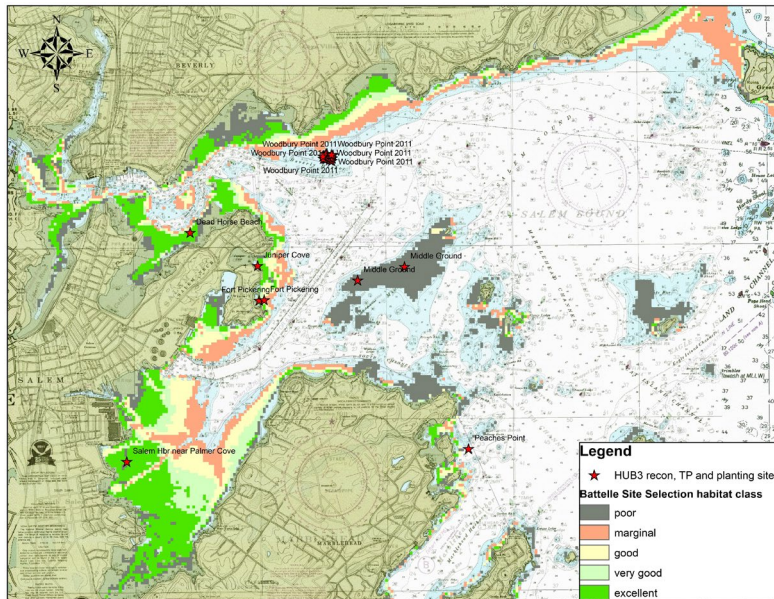
Step 3: Monitoring (~5 yrs)



What does a 'typical' eelgrass restoration look like?

Case Study: Middle Ground Salem, MA

Step 1: Site Selection and Test plots (~3 yrs)



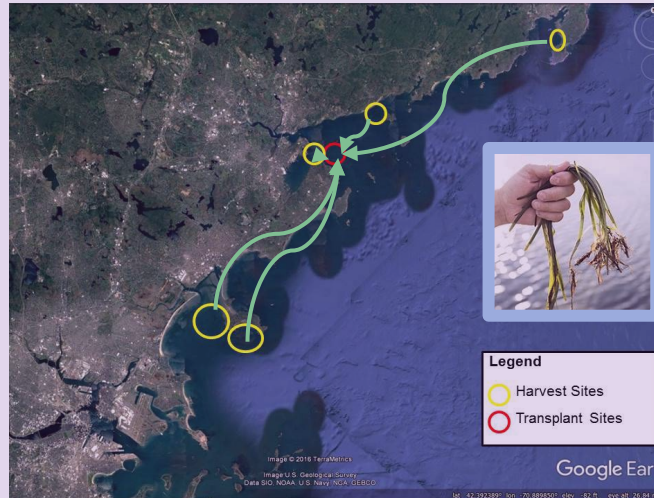
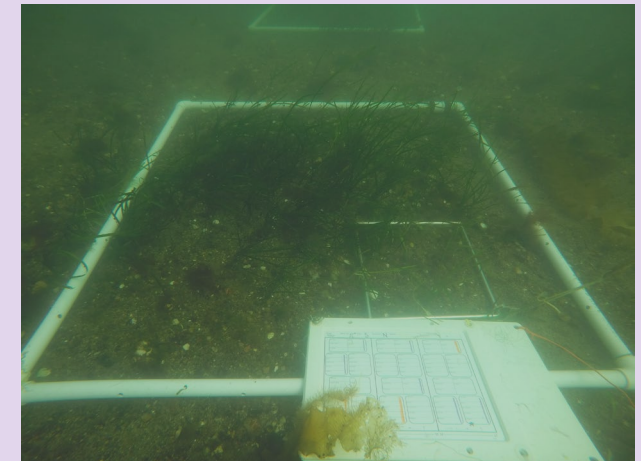
\$250,000.00

Step 2: Planting (~2 yrs)



\$300,000.00

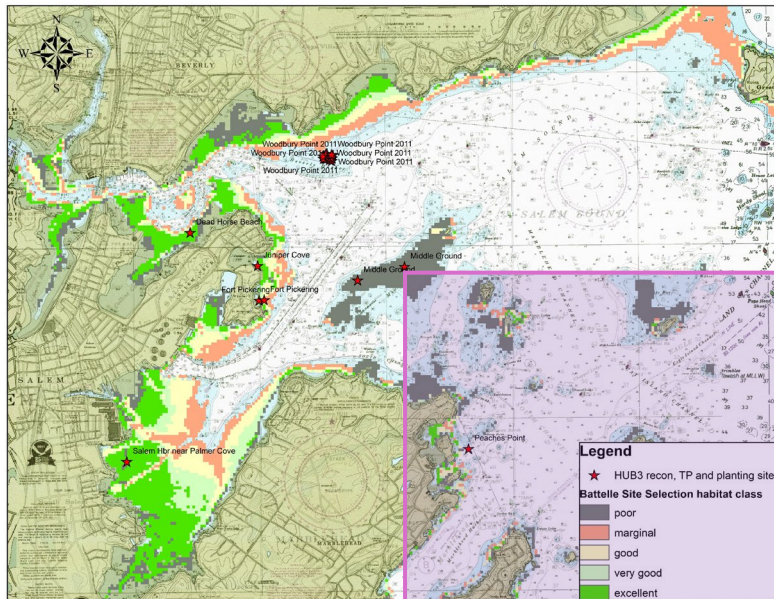
Step 3: Monitoring (~5 yrs)



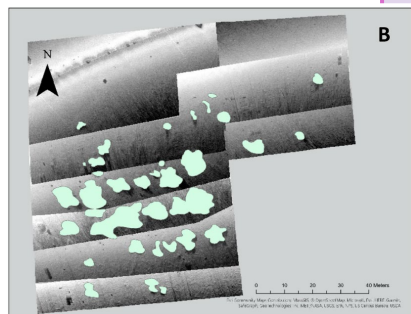
What does a 'typical' eelgrass restoration look like?

Case Study: Middle Ground Salem, MA

Step 1: Site Selection and Test plots (~3 yrs)

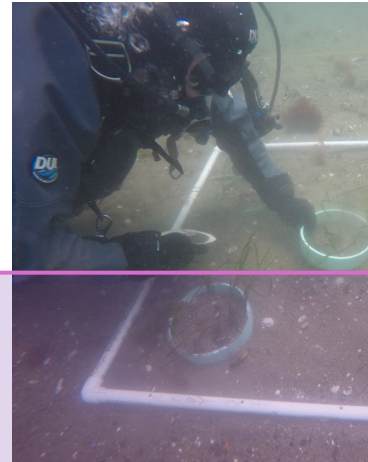


\$250,000.00

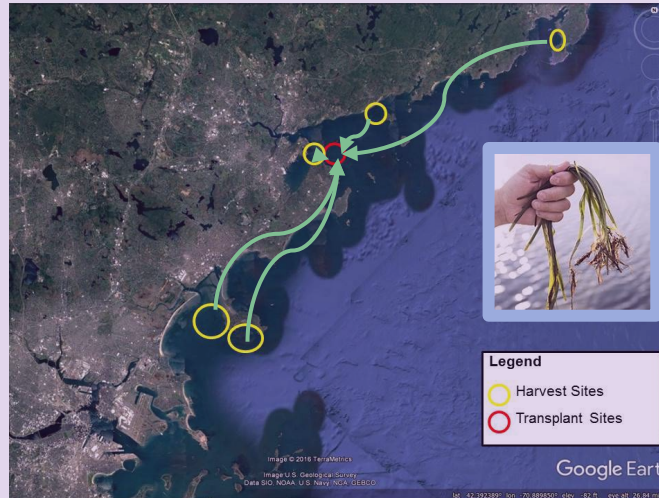


1/6 of an acre of eelgrass distributed over 3/4 acre area of seafloor

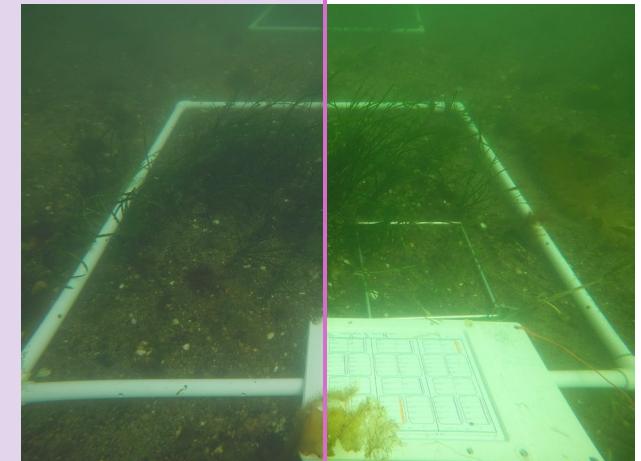
Step 2: Planting (~2 yrs)



\$300,000.00



Step 3: Monitoring (~5 yrs)



Lessons learned (from 2011 and Now)

- Planting site selection crucial to success – need site specific sediment and water quality data; very few suitable sites in MA; Sediment is important and potentially limiting in site selection
- ***Yes, but restorations to date have used eelgrass from benign sites- best ‘looking’ meadow may not be the best donor***
 - *A greater focus on donor site selection may increase suitable restoration sites*
 - *Even with improved donor site selection, limitations in our ability to measure and control coastal environments makes eelgrass restoration via transplants or seeds low odds and thus any meaningful success (in terms of reversing losses) will require long term and large-scale investment not ideal for mitigation which typically operates on small scales and short timelines.*
- Vegetative transplants is labor intensive and expensive for low payoff
 - ***Yes, this continues to be the case***
 - ***Seeding may prove to be a more efficient method, but will require greater upfront investment in infrastructure***
- Need to fix problems causing decline of eelgrass before we can plant...but how?; Consider other management tools for mitigating loss
 - ***Conservation mooring work, but are likely only 1-5 hectares of restoration available. This may be enough area to cover mitigation needs for foreseeable future, but will not contribute reversing the bulk of eelgrass declines across the state***

Where has eelgrass been restored in Massachusetts?



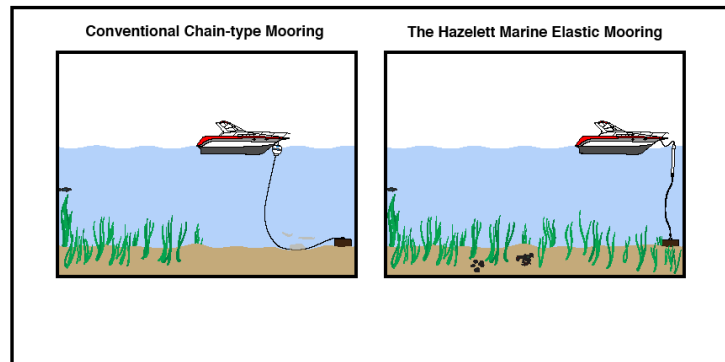
Restoration process

- Site selection key – many failed projects
- Preliminary site selection: GIS application of Preliminary Transplant Suitability Index (PTSI - Short et al., 2002)
- “Groundtruthing” in the field, narrowing the site choices
- Test transplants
- Evaluation based on test transplants
- Further planting based on results – hope is that eelgrass will eventually spread on its own both vegetatively and by seeds
- Ongoing evaluation / monitoring

Alternative mitigation strategies

Conservation moorings

- Impacts/ benefits not quantified yet
- Re-growth in mooring scars may take years
- Adjacent traditional moorings may slow re-growth



Alternative mitigation strategies

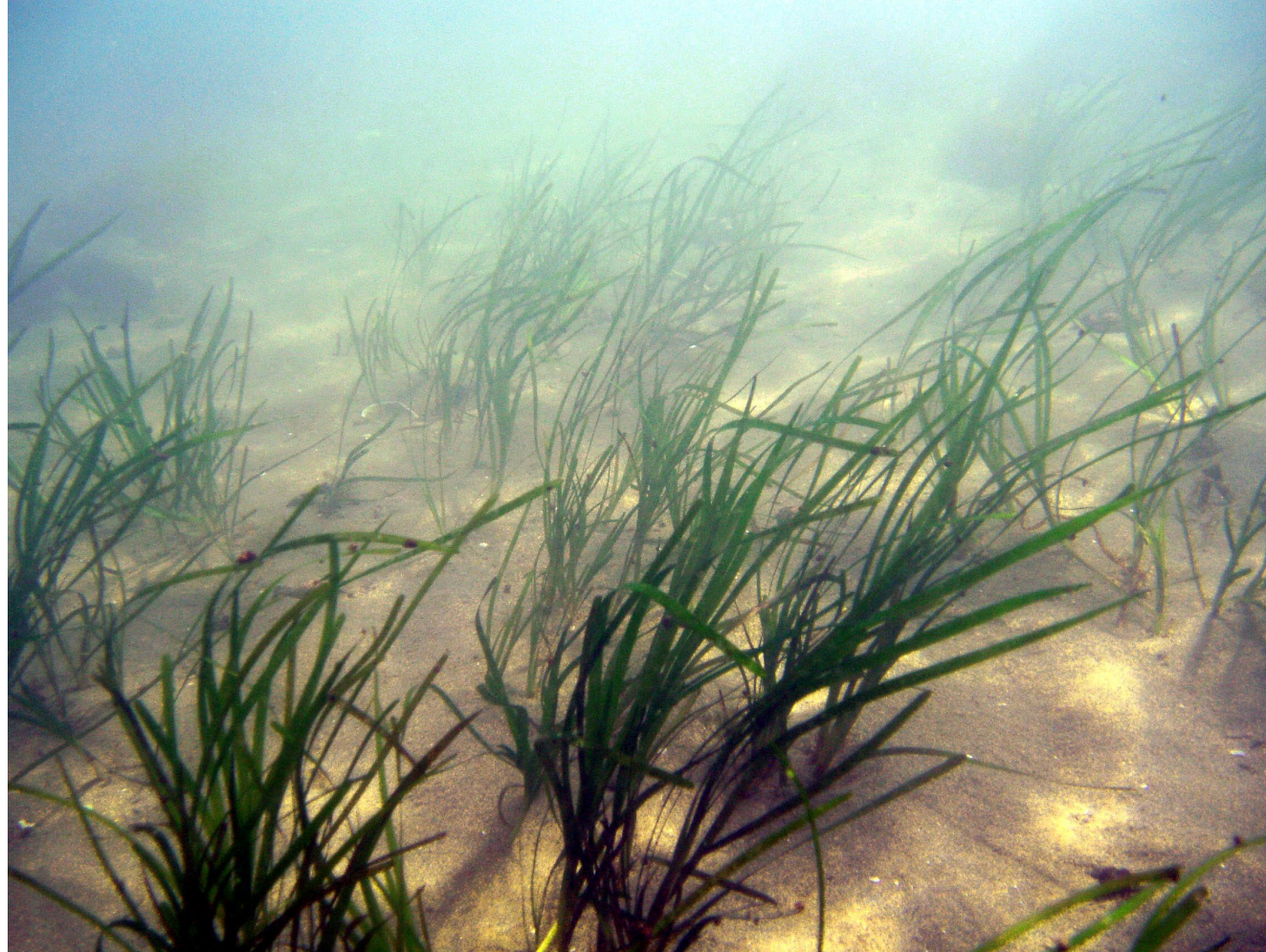
Protection of restored eelgrass sites

- Currently no regulatory mechanism
- Competing uses and stakeholders (fishing, navigation projects, private docks and piers)



Successful eelgrass restoration in a formerly eutrophic estuary (Boston Harbor) supports the use of a multifaceted watershed approach to mitigating eelgrass loss

2011



Alison Leschen, Kathryn Ford, Tay Evans

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

Is there a way forward for eelgrass?



1. Stop mitigating impacts to eelgrass through eelgrass planting
 - a. Prioritizes mitigation that identifies and removes a known stressor (e.g., conservation moorings)
 - b. Change regulations to avoid impacts to eelgrass
2. Improve documentation of eelgrass restoration: *‘Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it’*
 - a. Track restoration activity using a public-facing spatial database. Clarify information necessary for restoration: Purpose (e.g., mitigation, experimental), Restoration Location, Area, Donor Location(s), Date, Success at final Monitoring)
 - b. Increased reporting of restoration activities by practitioners (success and failures!)
3. Encourage regional approaches and knowledge sharing to increase eelgrass restoration capacity
 - a. It’s a big ocean. We need more people involved in this space!
 - b. Develop spaces to continue to foster regional collaboration



Summary

Avoid and minimize impact to eelgrass !!!!

While eelgrass restoration can be successful, suitable locations are scarce, and the process is very labor intensive (\$\$\$).

Therefore, other mitigation strategies that address cause of eelgrass loss may have broader impact and be a more efficient use of resources



Maryland:

Approval to harvest, cut, or remove vegetation

(c) Except as provided in this section, before a person may harvest, cut, or otherwise remove or eradicate submerged aquatic vegetation from any land under the tidal waters of the State below the mean high tide, the person shall submit to the Department for approval a description of:

- (1) Why the removal of submerged aquatic vegetation is necessary;
- (2) The proposed method of removal;
- (3) A plan showing the site at which the activity is proposed; and
- (4) The extent of submerged aquatic vegetation to be removed.

C. Exemptions from a State Tidal Wetlands License and a Private Tidal Wetlands Permit. The following activities are exempted from the requirement to obtain a license from the Board or a license, general license, general permit, or permit from the Department under this subtitle:

- (1) Dredging of seafood products by any licensed operator including normal leased bottom activities permitted under Natural Resources Article, Title 4, Subtitle 11, Annotated Code of Maryland, and COMAR 08.02.08.12, or the harvesting of submerged aquatic vegetation provided the root system is not affected;

Virginia

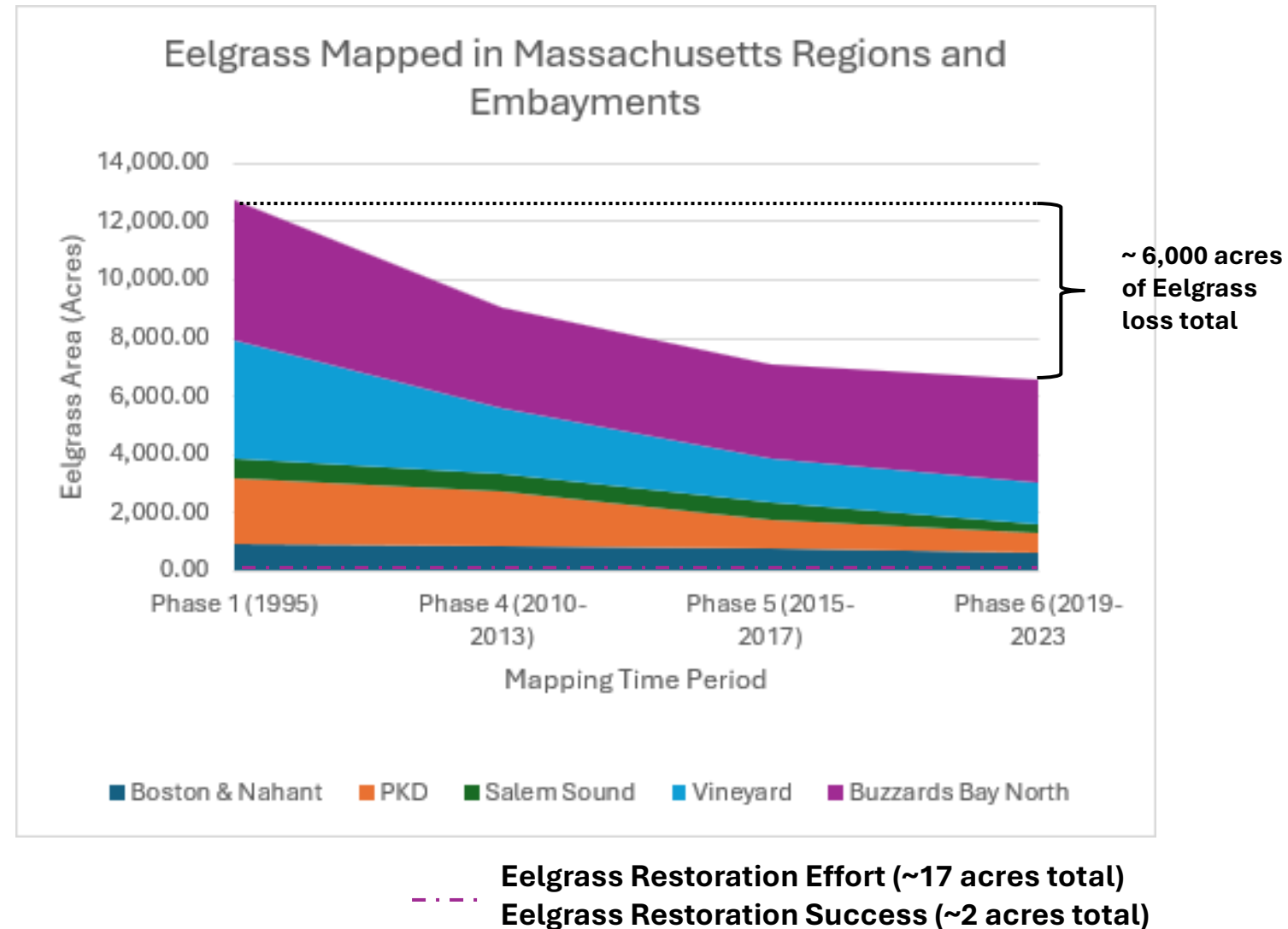
A. Any removal of naturally occurring SAV from state bottom or planting of nursery stock SAV for any purpose, except as part of a prior-approved research or scientific investigation, shall require prior approval by the commission. In determining whether to grant approval for SAV removal or planting, the commission shall be guided by § 28.2-1205 of the Code of Virginia and this chapter, or any new and improved methodologies as approved by the commission. Permits will be valid for a period of three years, but may be revoked upon a finding by the commission that the permittee failed to meet the monitoring and/or reporting requirements, or deviated from the specific activities authorized by permit. Permit fees and royalties shall be assessed in accordance with § 28.2-1206 of the Code of Virginia. Extraction of plants for commercial resale purposes is prohibited. Out-of-state and out-of-watershed transfers will be critically evaluated.

B. Any request to remove SAV from or plant SAV upon state bottom shall be accompanied by a completed Joint Permit Application (JPA), submitted to the Commission, that must include specific information that is critical to properly evaluate the probabilities of transplantation success while minimizing impacts to established donor bed populations. This information also allows scientists and regulators to track the progress of various projects and learn from previous projects which methods and sites are promising for further restoration or enhancement efforts. The specific information required will include the following:

1. Project specifics. Applicants for collections of wild stock SAV for transplanting should include a description of the purpose of the activity. This includes a classification of the activity as a research project, educational or environmental organization restoration project, or

How has eelgrass restoration been going?

And how does restoration effort and success compare to statewide eelgrass trends?





Eelgrass Restoration in Massachusetts

...A tale of hard work and failure