

*ASMFC*



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## 2020 Spring Meeting Webinar Summary

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

2020 Spring Meeting Webinar  
May 5 & 6, 2020

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### Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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## **ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2020)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to review and consider final action on Draft Addendum III to Amendment 3. Addendum III proposes options to better manage the Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) sub-annual catch limit (ACL) under low quota scenarios. These options include additional tools for allocation distribution and expanding the landing provisions across different permit categories within the days out program. Public comment period on the Draft Addendum took place in February and March, with four public hearings held in three jurisdictions (Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts).

At the time of the meeting, a final rule for the New England Fishery Management Council's (Council) Amendment 8, which proposes a long-term acceptable biological catch (ABC) control rule, had not been published by NOAA Fisheries. The proposed ABC control rule could result in low Atlantic herring ACLs should the resource continue to be below its biomass target. Amendment 8 also proposes prohibiting the use of midwater trawl gear inshore of 12 nautical miles from the U.S./Canada border to the Rhode Island/Connecticut border and inshore of 20 nautical miles off the east coast of Cape Cod. These proposed measures could limit when and where midwater trawl gear can be fished in Area 1A. Additionally, an assessment update for Atlantic herring will be finalized later this summer that may impact specifications for the 2021 fishing season.

Given these items, and an interest by Commission and Council leadership to meet and discuss management authority in Area 1A, the Board moved to postpone action on Addendum III. Once the final rule has been published on Amendment 8 and Commission/Council leadership have met, the Board will take up final action on Addendum III.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Move to postpone final action on Draft Addendum III until after a final rule on Amendment 8 is published and Council/Commission leadership can meet to discuss herring management.**

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. White. Motion passes (9 in favor).

## **ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2020)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board received an update on additional analyses conducted by the Ecological Reference Points (ERP) Work Group, as requested by the Board at the 2020 Winter Meeting. At that meeting, the ERP Work Group presented example ERPs developed as part of the 2019 benchmark assessment. The example ERPs were defined as the level of Atlantic menhaden fishing mortality ( $F$ ) that would maintain Atlantic striped bass at its biomass target or threshold when Atlantic striped bass was fished at its  $F$  target, while all other focal species (bluefish, Atlantic herring, weakfish, spiny dogfish) in the ERP model are fished at status quo levels (i.e., 2017). However, an important

conclusion of the benchmark assessment is that the exact values and definition of the ERPs depend on ecosystem management objectives.

The additional analyses explored the sensitivity of the ERPs to different assumptions about ecosystem conditions (i.e., different biomass levels and  $F$  rates on the other focal species). The ERP Work Group presented the results of these analyses, including the values of the ERPs under the different scenarios and the probability of exceeding the respective ERPs under a total allowable catch of 216,000 metric tons (status quo) for 2019-2021. The ERP Work Group also presented tradeoff curves and graphs to illustrate the tradeoffs between the management objectives for different species.

The ERP Workgroup and Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee noted several sources of uncertainty in the analyses that need further exploration to better understand the sensitivity of the model and the uncertainty in the ERPs. These uncertainties included differences between the fishing rates in the Fishery Management Plans and in the ERP model for some species, a possible overestimation of the importance of Atlantic herring for striped bass diets, and the inability of weakfish to rebuild under any fishing rates explored in the analyses. The ERP Work Group therefore recommended additional analyses to explore (1) alternate Atlantic herring biomass scenarios given the uncertainty in future Atlantic herring recruitment; (2) sensitivity to model parameterization of the Atlantic herring – Atlantic striped bass relationship; and (3) scenarios where other ERP focal species are fished at their single-species  $F$  reference points. These analyses will help the Board to better understand the sensitivity of the ERPs to different ecosystem assumptions and sources of uncertainty, as well as provide context for Board discussions around risk and ecosystem management objectives.

The Board tasked the ERP Work Group with conducting the recommended analyses. The results will be reviewed at the August meeting when the Board is expected to consider a motion to adopt ERPs for Atlantic menhaden.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Task the ERP workgroup to continue with analyses to address the listed recommended scenarios before the August board meeting**

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes unanimously.

## **ATLANTIC COASTAL COOPERATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM COORDINATING COUNCIL (MAY 5, 2020)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The ACCSP Coordinating Council met to review the activities of the Funding Subcommittee and to take final action on the FY2021 Request for Proposals. The Council approved the draft RFP as presented by staff. As part of the consent agenda, the Council also approved minutes from October 2019 meeting, committee updates, and program updates.

The Coordinating Council was presented an MRIP draft report to Congress on State Partnerships. Comments are due to Geoff White, [Geoff.white@accsp.org](mailto:Geoff.white@accsp.org), by May 20<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, please contact Geoff White, ACCSP Director, at [Geoff.white@accsp.org](mailto:Geoff.white@accsp.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

#### **Motion to approve the RFP by consent.**

Motion made by Coordinating Council Chair Lynn Fegley. Motions passes with no objections.

## **TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2020)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Tautog Management Board met to consider a conservation equivalency (CE) proposal from the State of Rhode Island. The proposal outlines a one fish increase in the bag limit for the party/charter industry during the fall fishing season. The proposal would create a different set of management measures not only between Massachusetts and Rhode Island, but also between different fishing modes within Rhode Island on the same water bodies. Reasons cited for the proposal were negative economic impacts the industry has experienced since the current regulations were implemented in 2018 (a reduction in the general creel limit from 6 to 5). Additionally, it was noted that given the current stock status (not overfished and overfishing is not occurring) in the Massachusetts-Rhode Island (MARI) Region, the proposed changes would not negatively affect the stock. As part of the analysis presented in the proposal, harvest was estimated to increase by less than 1% from 2018 harvest levels under the proposed measures given the for-hire sector makes up a small proportion of the state's annual harvest. In submitting the CE proposal for Board review, the Plan Review Team (PRT), Technical Committee (TC), Law Enforcement Committee (LEC), and the Advisory Panel (AP) all reviewed the proposal and provided feedback for the Board's consideration. The PRT found the proposal was lacking standard information required as part of submitting a CE proposal, including how the proposal aligns with the FMP objectives, as well as monitoring of potential impacts from the proposed measures. Additionally, given the proposal would result in an increase in harvest, and there were no offsetting changes in size limit or season length, the PRT found the proposal was more a request to change current recreational measures than a CE proposal as it was not 'conservation neutral'. Members of the TC and AP both agreed with the PRT's assessment. Lastly, the LEC noted points previously highlighted in its January 2020 memo regarding the challenges of enforcing differing measures on shared water bodies as well as differing measures by fishing mode. Taking into consideration feedback from the PRT, TC, LEC, and AP, the Board did not approve the proposal.

Following the Board vote and under other business, a number of Board members expressed concern about the overall impacts the current COVID-19 pandemic poses to recreational fisheries in general and the tautog fishery in particular, both for the for-hire industry as well as private anglers. Moving forward, the Commission's Executive Committee will initiate a discussion on how to provide guidance for considering changes to 2020 recreational measures to accommodate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

**Motions**

**Move to approve the Rhode Island conservational equivalency proposal to increase the bag limit for the party and charter mode to 6 fish during the fall season beginning on October 15, 2020. All other tautog recreational management measures will remain unchanged.**

<u>Size Limit</u> (inches)	<u>Possession Limits</u> (number of fish/person/day)	<u>Open Seasons</u>
16"	3 fish (up to 10/private vessel)	March 1 – May 31 August 1 – October 14
	0	June 1 – July 31
	5 fish private sector (up to 10/private vessel)	October 15 – December 31
	<b>6 fish Party/Charter</b>	

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion fails (1 in favor, 9 opposed).

**ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2020)**

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to review predicted fishery performance in 2020 based on final Addendum VI measures and new stock projections with updated data. Addendum VI called for an 18% reduction in total removals relative to 2017 levels in order to achieve the fishing mortality (*F*) target in 2020. To achieve this, states were required to implement the Addendum VI measures for the ocean and Chesapeake Bay fisheries, although some states implemented alternative measures through the fishery management program’s conservation equivalency (CE) process. As a result, the total overall predicted reduction in 2020 would likely differ from the 18% reduction originally calculated, because that calculation assumed all states would implement the Addendum VI measures.

Overall, the Technical Committee (TC) concluded the combination of Addendum VI and CE measures implemented in 2020 would not significantly undermine the Board’s efforts to end overfishing and reduce *F* to the *F* target in 2020. The TC calculated that final 2020 measures would result in an overall predicted 15% reduction compared to the 18% reduction calculated for the consistent measures. The probability that *F* in 2020 will be at or below the *F* target was projected to be lower than in the original analysis, although the confidence intervals of the original and updated projections almost entirely overlap. However, these calculations assume that fishing effort in 2020 will be similar to effort in 2016-2017. This is always a source of uncertainty in recreational bag and size limit analysis, and COVID-19 only increases uncertainty about effort and removals in 2020.

Given this is the first time the Board met via webinar, the decision was made for this meeting to be informational only. Consequently, action on two postponed motions was deferred to the August meeting. These motions consider (1) accountability measures specific to Addendum VI, and (2) initiating an Amendment to revisit and address a suite of management issues including fishery goals and objectives, reference points, management triggers, stock rebuilding, area-specific management, and commercial allocation. Alongside these motions, the Board had also expressed its intent to revisit the management program’s CE provision and to pursue accountability measures for recreational striped bass fisheries in the future. In the interim, the Board decided to form a Work Group (WG) of Board members to further discuss these and any other issues that should be considered in a future management document, with the WG reporting back to the Board in August. This will allow work to

continue on these important issues to the extent practical during these challenging times. WG meetings will be open to the public and progress reports will be made available (when possible) to ensure transparency of WG activities.

For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mappelman@asmfc.org](mailto:mappelman@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### **Motions**

No motions made.

## **ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD & MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (MAY 6, 2020)**

### **Meeting Summary**

The Commission's Bluefish Management Board (Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) via webinar to provide guidance on the development of draft management alternatives for the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. First, the Board and Council were presented a summary of public comments received through the supplemental scoping period that occurred in February and March of this year. Next, the Board and Council reviewed Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT)/Plan Development Team (PDT) recommendations on the scope of the amendment. The Board and Council determined that the following issues be considered for further development:

- Fishery management plan goals and objectives
- Recreational/commercial allocations
- Commercial allocations to the states
- Recreational/commercial sector transfers
- Commercial state-to-state quota transfers
- Rebuilding plan
- Sector specific management uncertainty
- Separate allocations for the for-hire and private sectors of the recreational fishery
- *De minimis* provision to relieve states from having to adopt recreational fishery regulations

In the coming weeks, the FMAT/PDT will meet to discuss the guidance provided by the Board and Council and prepare an initial range of management alternatives. The two management bodies are expected to reconvene jointly via webinar in June to refine draft management alternatives. For more detailed information regarding the amendment process and timeline visit the [bluefish amendment action page](#).

For more information, please contact Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [dleaning@asmfc.org](mailto:dleaning@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### **Motions**

No motions made.

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

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board (Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) via webinar to discuss two issues: (1) management response to COVID-19 pandemic fishery impacts; and (2) the development of draft alternatives for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment.

### **COVID-19 and Recreational Fisheries**

At the start of the meeting, Commission leadership addressed concerns expressed by various Board members about overarching impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on recreational fisheries in general, and the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries in particular. Moving forward, the Commission's Executive Committee will start a discussion to develop guidance for states to consider changes to 2020 recreational measures to adapt to the challenges posed by COVID-19. States should forward suggestions to Commission staff.

### **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment**

The Board and Council reviewed the summary of public comments provided during the Amendment scoping process, comments from the Advisory Panels (APs) on types of alternatives to be considered, and recommendations from the Plan Development Team (PDT)/Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) on the scope of issues to be included in the Amendment. The two bodies then discussed which types of alternatives should be further developed by the FMAT for consideration by the Board and Council at their next joint meeting.

The Board and Council supported exploration of a variety of approaches for potential modifications to the commercial and recreational allocations for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. These include status quo, allocations based on different data or time series, allocation percentages intended to produce approximately status quo harvest by sector compared to recent years prior to catch limit revisions, separate allocations for the for-hire and private sectors of the recreational fishery, a "harvest control rule" approach, dynamic allocations, and allocation transfers between sectors. Acknowledging widespread concerns voiced by the public and AP members regarding the recreational data used for management, the Council and Board also supported the development of draft alternatives to address recreational accountability and catch accounting. Finally, both bodies agreed that alternatives to allow the sale of allocations between sectors and allocation set-asides should not be included in this amendment. Based on this feedback, the FMAT will develop a range of draft alternatives for Council and Board review at the next joint meeting, which is expected to occur via webinar in June.

### ***Motions***

No motions made.