

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Business Session of the Commission

January 25, 2024

10:30 – 11 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting

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.

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| 1. Welcome/Call to Order (<i>J. Cimino</i>) | 10:30 a.m. |
| 2. Board Consent | 10:30 a.m. |
| • Approval of Agenda | |
| • Approval of Proceedings from October 2023 | |
| 3. Public Comment | 10:35 a.m. |
| 4. Consider Approval of Revision to 2024 Action Plan (<i>T. Kerns</i>) | 10:40 a.m. |
| • Addition to Goal 1 to Develop an Action with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council for Summer Flounder Commercial Measures | |
| 5. Review and Consider Approval of 2024-2028 Strategic Plan Final Action | 10:45 a.m. |
| 6. Review Noncompliance Findings, if necessary Final Action | 10:55 a.m. |
| 7. Other Business/Adjourn | 11:00 a.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.

**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
BUSINESS SESSION**

**Beaufort Hotel
Beaufort, North Carolina
Hybrid Meeting**

October 18, 2022

These minutes are draft and subject to approval.
The Business Session will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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1. **Approval of Agenda** by Consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings from November 9, 2022** by Consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the 2024 Action Plan** (Page 10). Motion by Pat Keliher; second by John Clark. Motion carried without objection (Page 10).
4. **Move to elect Joe Cimino as ASMFC Chair** (Page 13). Motion by Pat Keliher on behalf of the Nominating Committee. Motion approved by unanimous consent (Page 14).
5. **Move to elect Dan McKiernan as ASMFC Vice-Chair** (Page 14). Motion by Pat Keliher on behalf of the Nominating Committee. Motion approved by unanimous consent (Page 14).
6. **Move to adjourn** by Consent (Page 15).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Pat Keliher, ME (AA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Cheri Patterson, NH (AA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Raymond Kane, MA (GA)	Lynn Fegley, MD (AA) (Acting)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Pat Geer, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Justin Davis, CT (AA)	Chad Thomas, NC, proxy for Rep. Wray (LA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Chris McDonough, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)	Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)	Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)	Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)	Ingrid Braun, PRFC

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

Staff

Robert Beal	Geoff White	James Boyle
Toni Kerns	Julie Simpson	Chelsea Tuohy
Laura Leach	Lindsey Aubart	Caitlin Starks
Pat Campfield	Madeline Musante	Katie Drew
Tina Berger	Kristen Anstead	Jeff Kipp

Guests

Max Appelman, NOAA	Beth Govoni, NC DMF	Will Poston
Alan Bianchi, NC DMF	Joseph Grist, VMRC	Kathy Rawls, NC (AA)
Jeffrey Brust, NJ DEP	Jesse Hornstein, NYS DEC	McLean Seward, NC DEQ
Robert Corbett, NC DMF	Chip Lynch, NOAA	Somers Smott, VMRC
David Cupka	John Maniscalco, NYS DEC	Mike Spinney, Strippers Forever
Bob Danielson	Steve Minkinen, US FWS	Mike Tambone
Phil Edwards, RI DEM	Patrick Moran, MA	Steve Train, ME (GA)
Julie Evans	Environmental Police	Peter Whelan
Cynthia Ferrio, NOAA	Brandon Muffley, MAFMC	Anthony Wood, NOAA
James Fletcher, United Natl	Allison Murphy, NOAA	Chris Wright, NOAA
Fishermen's Assoc	Thomas Newman	Renee Zobel, NH FGD
F Joel Fodrie, Institute of Marine	Ronald Owens, PRFC	
Sciences (UNC-CH)	Chris Piatek	

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The Business Session of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Rachel Carson Ballroom via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Wednesday, October 18, 2023, and was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by Chair Spud Woodward.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR SPUD WOODWARD: I want to call the Business Session of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting to order here in Beaufort, North Carolina, on Wednesday, October the 18th. I want to welcome everybody.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR WOODWARD: First order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Do we have any requested modifications or additions to the agenda? Seeing none; any opposition to accepting the agenda as presented? Seeing none; we'll consider the agenda adopted by unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR WOODWARD: Next item is Approval of the Proceedings from our May, 2023 meeting, which are in the briefing materials. Any corrections, edits, modifications to the proceedings? If not; any opposition to accepting them as presented? Seeing none; we'll consider those accepted by unanimous consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR WOODWARD: At this point we provide an opportunity for Public Comment. Any member of the public in the room? I don't see anyone. Anybody online that is requesting public comment? Nobody online, very good. We'll move ahead.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER APPROVAL OF 2024 ACTION PLAN

CHAIR WOODWARD: Our next item is, I'm going to call on Bob to present the 2024 Action Plan, and he'll be doing that in conjunction with staff. Bob, the floor is yours.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Great, thank you, Mr. Chair. The Draft Action Plan is in supplemental materials for the Business Session. The Administrative Oversight Committee has already gone through this once, so I think it is pretty close to reflecting the priorities that staff and the Chairs of each management board and respective committee and others have worked through over the last couple of months.

I think it's a very close document. But what we'll do, well the convention of this document is that the way it is presented here. Anything in bold is new for this year. Anything in un-bolded text is rollover or continuing work that we do each year, or is a multiyear project. I think focusing on the bolded text is probably the most important part here.

Then as we have always done in the past, we'll have each senior staff member of the Commission go through their goal, and present the highlights, and at the end of that we can ask any questions. I think for Goal 1, what we usually do is Toni will go through all the high priority species projects for next year, and then we'll pause, and then go into the medium and low priorities, since there is quite a bit of information in Goal 1. With that, Mr. Chair, if you're okay with it, I'll ask Toni to jump into Goal 1.

MS. TONI KERNS: The ISFMP Team worked with the chairs in each of the boards to come up with these actions. Start off, as Bob said, with a high priority species, American eel. We have two addenda, the first is looking at coastwide catch for yellow eel, in response to the stock assessment, and the second is to address Maine's glass eel quota, which expires at the end of 2024.

For American lobster, we'll start work on the assessment that will be completed in 2025. We'll

continue to update the indices, and then still a sort of holding pattern for the document is the Management Strategy Evaluation. If the Board does proceed with this, we'll have to, depending on the level of a management strategy evaluation. Some of these can be quite expensive, so funding may still be a question mark moving forward with this.

For Atlantic croaker, we'll conduct the traffic light analysis, respond as necessary, as well as review and present the stock assessment. For Atlantic striped bass, we'll finalize Addendum II, which is the reduction and recreational and commercial measures. We will conduct the stock assessment update, and present it to the Board and respond if necessary.

The TC is going to work on developing alternatives for bag and size limit analysis for effort controls. There is a possibility we may try to look into some season analyses while the Board does direct the TC to do that. For black sea bass, summer flounder, scup and bluefish, we'll continue to work with the Mid-Atlantic Council on the recreational measure setting process and framework and addenda.

The portion that we'll be doing this coming year with the Mid-Atlantic Council is conducting the public hearings for that document. For bluefish, we'll be implementing the new management uncertainty tool, in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Council. For horseshoe crab, we're going to set the 2025 Delaware Bay State Harvest Specification.

We will work to conduct the workshop to evaluate the Delaware Bay management goals and objectives, and we'll conduct the stock assessment update and respond if necessary. For red drum, we're going to present the stock assessment and peer review for the benchmark, and respond if necessary.

For scup, we'll be monitoring the management and research activities of the Mid-Atlantic Council on the scup discard and gear restricted

area analysis. We do not actually conduct these, since all of the GRAs are in federal waters. But we do follow along and help out when necessary. For shad and river herring, we will conduct and present the river herring benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary. That is all for the high priority species. I'll take any questions.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Yes, Adam, I see your hand is raised online, so go ahead with your question.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: Excellent, good morning, thank you very much. I think there is one typo here on the black sea bass, the second bullet point, I believe is meant to be separated into two and three. I think the presentation of the management track stock assessment is a separate item. The other comment I have is with regards to your comments on striped bass, about potential Board desire to look at seasonal analysis. Might it make more sense to change this third bullet for striped bass to simply read, develop alternatives and analysis for effort controls?

MS. KERNS: If the Board does add seasons, we can change it to that, Adam. We're waiting for direction from the Board on that though. That would be this afternoon.

MR. NOWALSKY: Yes, if you would like to wait and then change it, I think that's fine. You know my suggestion here was just to remove the specificity of bag and size limit, not necessarily add the seasonal part, and then just whatever the Board comes up with, whether it's bag, size, season or anything else, would seem like we're covered. But I'll defer to you the best way forward.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Adam, any other questions for Toni? All right, move on.

MS. KERNS: The medium-low priorities, and just to state that this isn't that these species have any less importance to the Commission. This is about workload for staff and committees. For Atlantic herring, we'll monitor and respond if necessary to the activities of the New England Fishery Management Council, specifically looking at

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Amendment 10, which addresses spatial and temporal allocation, and management of Atlantic herring at the unit level, to minimize user conflicts, contribute to optimum yield, and support rebuilding of that resource.

For Atlantic menhaden, we'll initiate work on the single-species stock assessment update to be completed in 2025, and also continue to work on the ERP benchmark stock assessment, which will also be peer reviewed in 2025. For Atlantic sturgeon, we'll conduct and present the stock assessment update, and respond if necessary.

For coastal sharks, we'll monitor activities of NOAA Fisheries HMS, and if necessary, we will initiate an addendum to consider moving Oceanic whitetip to the prohibited species group. HMS has, I think already, shifted this, so this would just be something to follow suite of what HMS has already done.

For cobia, I should have brought this up into the higher priority species, because the Board did initiate the addendum to address recreational quota reallocation. This will be a higher priority, and we'll also collaborate with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the states to conduct a 2026 SEDAR stock assessment.

For Jonah crab, we will work with our ACCSP and our partners on implementing and integrating the tracking data device collection, as a part of Addendum IV. In northern shrimp, we will work with the Section to develop management action to consider implementation of an ongoing moratorium for shrimp, until the resource improves. We'll also continue the development of a management trigger/wakeup index, to indicate when the stocks could support a commercial fishery, so when to end that ongoing moratorium. For Spanish mackerel, we will monitor the activities of the South Atlantic Council, looking at the framework amendment addressing the ABCs, as well as work with them in conducting Spanish

and king mackerel port meetings. The committee will also develop, the TC will develop a white paper characterizing the recreational and commercial Spanish mackerel fisheries along the coast. For spiny dogfish, we'll present the management track stock assessment.

For spot, we will work on the benchmark stock assessment that will be conducted in 2025. This stock assessment is being delayed one year, due to the loss of the lead assessment scientist for this species. We'll hear more about that at the Policy Board meeting. For tautog, we'll continue to work on monitoring the tagging program, and the tagging study, to look at the different types of tags. For weakfish, we'll initiate the stock assessment update for 2025. Any questions on medium priorities?

CHAIR WOODWARD: Questions, anybody online? I don't see any, so we'll move ahead.

MS. KERNS: Lastly, I'm just going to go through the Cross Cutting Issues. First, we are going to continue to monitor impacts of changes to the MRIP program, fishing effort survey design, and data presentation standards relative to our FMPs and our stock assessments. We will consider strategies for increasing the responsiveness in our management plans to climate change and start thinking more about what can we do to make our FMPs more adaptable, as we see species moving up and down the coast or east and west, due to climate change.

We will participate in the East Coast Climate Change Coordination Group to track the progress of the draft potential action plan. We'll provide support to the climate innovation group, to track information and challenges relevant to the east coast fisheries, and identify areas that are worthy of consideration by the East Coast Climate Coordination Group, and identify new possible actions to undertake in the draft action plan.

These are actions for all of the east coast management bodies to take into consideration, not just the Commission. We'll also work with the Mid-Atlantic Council to clarify the role that we work

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towards when working on joint plans, to try to increase the efficiency and collaboration for these projects. This is really to put on paper how we work together as two management bodies. While we have a standard set of rules, they are not written down anywhere.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Toni, any questions? John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: It might be covered in some of the points made, but I didn't see anything about socioeconomics in here. It just comes to mind specifically for horseshoe crab, as we heard the other day. Of course, we deferred on allowing female harvest, and we heard from Craig Pugh that the females are worth more than the males.

One of the complaints we often hear from commercial fishermen is that we're always quick to take away quota, and very slow to give it back. I just didn't know whether, it probably would come up in the different things that are done, but whether it should be a specific bullet that we will look at such issues for some of these species.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Go ahead, Pat.

MR. PATRICK A. CAMPFIELD: John, I would suggest for the Socioeconomics Committee, if there is a specific task or some guidance that you could provide to the Committee, or the Horseshoe Crab Board could provide, we could take that up with the SES Committee.

CHAIR WOODWARD: All right, any other questions for Toni on Goal 1? Okay, thank you, Toni. Pat, are you going to handle Goal 2? All right.

MR. CAMPFIELD: Goal 2 covers all the fisheries research, stock assessment, and regional survey activities for the Commission for 2024. Again, we've consulted with the various scientific committees, as well as the science staff, like the

Assessment Science Committee, the Ecological Modeling Workgroup, and so on.

Under the Scientific Committee activities, the first new item is to consult the Assessment Science Committee for guidance on best practices related to the MRIP FES data and stock assessments., specifically reach out to MRIP statisticians to scope the magnitude of potential effort and catch estimate changes by species.

Then secondly, during stock assessments, conduct sensitivity analyses to evaluate the potential changes on assessment model results and stock status. Next, we will solicit the Assessment Science Committee input in the long-term stock assessment scheduling priorities, not just for the ASMFC schedule, but also our partners in the northeast through the NRCC and through SEDAR in the South Atlantic.

Under the Risk and Uncertainty activities, we will focus on red drum as the next test case, or test species for the Risk and Uncertainty Policy and Decision Tree. That had been a focus on cobia next, but because that assessment will be a few years out, we decided to switch to red drum, that is planned for completion in 2024. Then finally, support a Northeast Fish Passage Workshop to communicate and promote new innovations for improving passage efficiency.

That is an idea that was brought forth by Mass DMF, and USGS scientists recently. Under greater data collection, work with the three east coast regional management councils to characterize and address deficiencies, and NOAA Fisheries scientific support, and evaluate impacts to fisheries, including exploration of industry-based platforms to conduct fisheries research and surveys that was touched on earlier this morning.

Also, a request from the ERP Workgroup to increase the resolution of catch and survey information for future spatial modeling and stock assessments. It's relevant to ERP, but also stocks like striped bass, where we may be looking to shift to a spatial model. One of the outcomes or recommendations from the

Jonah crab stock assessment, was to explore the use of video surveys as a new fishery independent index.

We will work with the Northeast Science Center and other partners to see if that is feasible. Moving down to Fisheries Research. We will collaborate with USGS, New York DEC, and Delaware State University on a new project to develop sturgeon spawning stock abundance estimates in both the Hudson and Delaware Rivers. In other collaborations with universities, a new proposal has been funded through Saltonstall-Kennedy to conduct a striped bass management strategy evaluation. Again, that will have an emphasis on the spatial components of the striped bass stock, and potential management strategies. That is in collaboration with Virginia Tech University.

Moving down to ecosystem-based management and changing ocean conditions. Promote consistencies in fishery independent survey data collection across east coast geographic regions and jurisdictions, both state and federal, and develop data collection protocols to readily combine and use data, and coastwide modeling frameworks.

Also, improve coordination and knowledge sharing among the SSCs and the Commission Scientific Committee, particularly for species spanning multiple jurisdictions and jointly managed species. Another recommendation from the ERP Workgroup is to examine options to increase fisheries management integration across FMPs, in order to fully implement to a system-based modeling result.

Then finally, support the recreational study fleet pilot project. Monitor progress and respond if necessary. This is in collaboration with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, to look at hook and line surveys for alternative surveys, due to the wind energy development in the northeast. In a similar vein, evaluate SEAMAP Survey interactions with wind energy

development in the southeast. I think that is all the new activities for Goal 2.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any questions for Pat? Jason.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Like all good stuff. I just wanted to thank you for a little update to the Risk and Uncertainty section there, and that's mostly to meet my contractual obligation to say risk and uncertainty at each annual meeting. My more serious point is, with the SSCs, I'm interested in that one.

I wonder, have you been thinking about ways. I'm wondering what the mechanism is to like connect the groups. Maybe you haven't thought about that yet. Maybe you have. But I would be interested to chat about that with you a little bit, to help scope that out. But I think it's a great idea, and I think it could help with some of these cross jurisdictional management issues, but also, it's just always good to network like that, just for ideas and things like that.

MR. CAMPFIELD: Yes, thanks, Jay, it's one of the recommendations coming out of the Climate Scenario planning activities. Of the favorable things there is a number of your state agency scientists are on the SSCs, so there is some overlap already. But I'll pitch it to Toni for elaboration.

MS. KERNS: I'll say that this is something that we thought would be something that could be achievable in this coming year from our perspective. The NRCC or the Climate Leadership Group will be meeting in November, and so we'll have to see collectively if this is a priority for the Councils, NOAA Fisheries, and the Science Centers as well. If not, then it may be a little bit harder to achieve this. But there may be some mechanisms that we can do to try to take little bites at it, if it's not something that is a priority for everybody else.

DR. McNAMEE: That's all awesome. I think you guys are probably thinking about Mid-Atlantic, New England. But maybe there are opportunities, there is actually a broader SSC collaboration that occurs, in fact it's going to be in New England the next time

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they all meet. I'm not saying if there is any way to kind of connect in with that, but there are these opportunities where all of the SSCs come together. It would be awesome if the Commission could be a part of that as well, if there was a possibility.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Erika.

MS. ERIKA BURGESS: Like Jason, I'm going to bring up the Risk and Uncertainty part, I admit some unfamiliarity, but then I know you presented on it. But is there an opportunity to include, or does it already include a sensitivity analysis to the MRIP FES estimates into understanding risk and uncertainty for a species like red drum or anything else that would be considered through that? If not, could we add that to the tasks?

MR. CAMPFIELD: Yes, sorry, Erika. It's a little challenging to hear the first part of your question. If you could maybe repeat it. But I might pitch that to Jay, if it relates to the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tree.

MS. BURGESS: I'll try and go back. I had a gummy bear in my mouth, thanks, Doug. I was also wanting to bring up the risk and uncertainty part of the list, and was not as familiar with it as I would like to be, and probably should be. But I was curious whether it included an analysis of sensitivity to the MRIP FES estimates. I know that that was brought to light after the risk and uncertainty tool was developed. As we move forward with that tool, I was asking if we could also incorporate at that time, it looks at red drum, looking at sensitivity to MRIP FES.

DR. McNAMEE: Great point, thanks for the opportunity to weigh in on it. I think the answer to that is yes. The way the current construct of the risk and uncertainty tool works, is there are these, you can think of it like there are questions in there, and one of them is about the underlying data.

Where normally you might, if you have MRIP data, some commercial data, you have some sense of the uncertainty around that, given this kind of new information that we have that would probably change the answer to that, and offer a change to how you would answer that and implement some sort of risk buffer to that. I think there is absolutely a way that can connect in with the information we heard about, I think that was yesterday. Good question.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any other questions for Pat on Goal 2? Seeing none; we'll move on. I think our next one is Goal 3, and that is going to be Geoff.

MR. GEOFF WHITE: Goal 3 is focused on fisheries dependent data, collected and disseminated through the ACCSP. The introductory paragraph has added reference to biological and socioeconomic data, as those have gained focus coastwide. Of the items under continuing basis represent the bulk of the staff workload, and data activities to support the Commission and partner activities, including the 11 projects that were approved yesterday. Under partnerships, we did highlight the role of the ACCSP to coordinate regional recreational data needs and priorities as part of the recreational implementation plan developed last year, and then also an ongoing activity, as part of the MRIP regional implementation and infrastructure.

Under fisheries dependent data collection, it really highlights some software projects and preparation to develop modernized electronic dealer reporting applications. That would be better processing implementation that wouldn't occur until January, 2025. But the workload to get all the bits redeveloped, ready for both the online, mobile and bio upload portions to function takes a lot of work and coordination behind the scenes before it can be released.

The next item is to implement expanded at entry, quality control checks on the SAFIS eTrips, submissions for partner specific questions. That is automating a process that will tighten up the ranges of data that can be submitted, and automate

through the manual and paper processes that occur still today.

The other item is as exciting as the launch of the SciFish mobile application and project builder under the SAFIS umbrella for standardized citizen science data collection. Under recreational surveys, we will continue to develop and seek certification of a for-hire methodology to use logbook to estimate catch and effort with dockside validation.

The other item in process is to scope a pilot project to expand the data collection on discard data for recreational anglers. The intent there is to make modifications to how MRIP collects the discard information, and if that pilot is successful, to then ask that be a change to the core survey. Under data standards, distribution and use, we've updated the Atlantic coast data standards, but we really want to change how that is published to be a bit more of a searchable data standard on the ACCSP website.

We've already provided a lot of the databased driven standard code references, but making that a lot more accessible and maintained up to date, instead of under historical PDSI. Under data distribution and use, we really highlighted the list of species, where ACCSP staff have helped to validate the data provided for the stock assessment process and keep things moving in those areas. That's it.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Geoff, any questions for Geoff? Okay, seeing none; we'll move on to Goal 4, and well, Bob will handle that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Goal 4 is Law Enforcement Committee activities, essentially, and compliance with the FMPs. There really are minimal changes to that section every year, it's just kind of care and feeding of the Law Enforcement Committee monitors and provides feedback to the Board as requested.

In this section there are some highlights about vessel tracking system in the lobster addendum and Jonah crab addenda for implementing the trackers, they have to go on the vessels by December 15th of this year, sort of monitoring the progress of that. Then I think, if you could keep scrolling, Madeline, I don't have the document open in front of me. I think that is the only specific change in this section. As I mentioned, it's kind of care and feeding, and the continued activity of Law Enforcement Committee.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any questions for Bob on that? All right, if not we'll move on to Goal 5, and I think you or Pat, you and Toni were going to tag team that. I guess it's not really a tag team, so I know you'll do the best.

MR. CAMPFIELD: Under Goal 5 in the Commission's Habitat Program, as well as the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, just a couple of new items. The Habitat Committee will be deciding on the next habitat management series publication, so if you have any ideas for fresh topics there, please bring them forward. In the past they've worked on things like acoustics or offshore wind impacts on habitat.

Then the second item, if you could scroll down, please, is to support the Atlantic Fish Habitat Partnership in pursuing habitat restoration funding from the BIL and IRA acts of legislation. ACFHP has put in one proposal already for a pretty big request, 25 million dollars to do oyster restoration up and down the coast. There are several more opportunities through BIL and IRA, so they will be putting in more multimillion-dollar proposals up and down the coast. We'll see how they pan out, in terms of those applications and success. That is all, Mr. Chairman, under Goal 5.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any questions on Goal 5? Yes, Loren.

MR. LOREN W. LUSTIG: Just above the leverage of partnerships. Were educational issues, could we hear a little bit about what there might be involved in that, please?

MR. CAMPFIELD: Yes, thanks, Loren. You know the Commission has a long track record of developing fish habitat outreach products, they can be anything from fact sheets on habitats important to individual species, the habitat management series itself is another format for education. Generally, they would just go out to habitat practitioners, folks doing coastal zone management or restoration activities. But I think there is also K through 12 educational level information, so it's a quick smattering of what that covers.

MR. LUSTIG: Yes, thank you for that. Has there been any assessment for the relative effectiveness of the various options that are included within the educational formats? For example, perhaps we should be seeking out nature centers that are directly adjacent to the coast, and working with them to enhance education at those sorts of locations.

MR. CAMPFIELD: Thanks for that question. The best I can tell you, Loren, is there is a broad distribution list, again for habitat practitioners. I'm not aware that it specifically covers nature centers. I don't know if Tina might have any more information on that.

MS. TINA L. BERGER: Loren, we frequently get requests from nature centers for our habitat or our fisheries related information that we freely share with them, and we are always open to information or guidance on new information if they would like.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any other questions about habitat? Tina, I'm going to turn it over to you for Goal 6.

MS. BERGER: This is a goal on communications, outreach and media support. There is a lot of continuing items under this, but I will highlight some new focus in 2024, on the species that will be most prevalent, including striped bass, menhaden, horseshoe crabs, and continuing work on recreational reform initiatives with the Mid-Atlantic Council.

Science staff will continue to work with me on developing the overviews of stock assessments and there are quite a number of them for next year, including American lobster, croaker, herring, striped bass, ERP and red drum. We also have started to work on, but will do more next year on developing a story map on striped bass migration and spawning patterns, and the impact of environmental factors on recruitment.

This idea came out of one of our public hearings on striped bass emergency action and I just think it's a great idea, so we are working on that. We're also going to ask, as part of the website update, we'll create a page on best fishing practices and work to promote those, especially in increasingly catch and release fisheries.

Under new technologies, we will be upgrading and updating our website next year, based on staff input and recommendations from the Outreach Survey that you all participated in. The website was currently posted onsite, and we will look for opportunities to host that offsite, to increase security of our IT system and just to provide issues with maintenance.

I will be working with Jainita, who is our Fishery Science Coordinator, to redesign and migrate both the NEMAP and SEAMAP websites. She's already started with SEAMAP, and we'll be looking at potential RFPs or proposals for that. On to stakeholder participation. We sort of broadened the bullet on strengthening public input to look at a number of options, where we could do a better job of putting out what we are looking for soliciting information on, as well as gathering it.

Under Media Relations, obviously an important component of this action plan has been responding to the MRIP FES design issues, and I will continue to work with the MRIP staff on developing messaging to better explain what those impacts are, and next steps forward. Increasingly this year, we have been dealing with inaccuracies in media. We will continue to work towards trying to correct those, and get the Commission's story out there. That is it for Goal 6, thank you.

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CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Tina. Factual inaccuracies in news reports, hard to imagine, isn't it? Hard to imagine. Any questions for Tina? John.

MR. CLARK: Yes, just to that subject, Tina. I was very surprised by the lack of response for some pretty respected news agencies. Have you had any further follow up from any of those, about those horseshoe crab articles?

MS. BERGER: Yes, we were pretty assertive in going NER. We did pursue trying to get their ethics editor to take a stand. They put out a blanket statement saying, don't expect to hear back from us, unless we feel strongly about it. Their editors feel fairly strongly that they are on the right side of it, so they are not contemplating working with us on changing their story. They did modify one story that had to do with confidentiality. We feel like that is a minor win. But we still have an uphill battle with that.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any other questions for Tina? If not, Bob, Goal 7.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Goal 7 is our legislative activities that Alexander and I engage in, with the help of many folks around the table here. We appreciate that. It falls under really four main headings, relationships, legislations, appropriations and partnerships. I'll go through them pretty quickly.

But a lot of things in here are kind of ongoing activities that we do every year, engaging congressional offices, and making sure they know the Commission priorities and have our feedback on any relevant legislation that they are considering. But there are a few bold items in there that are worth mentioning.

One of the things that we're willing to do, is if you guys want to meet with member staff in your local districts at home. In other words, if you don't want to go to Capitol Hill when you're down in DC for meeting weeks, and you know

some of the folks at home, or you want to get to know the folks at home that are in their local district offices, we're more than happy to reach out and set up some appointments.

Depending on if the member of Congress is there or not, you can fly out to be part of that. Just let us know if we can help you engage with the local offices a little more than you have been. Then down under Legislation, you know there is a number of issues and specific acts that we'll continue to monitor. Alexander mentioned a lot of those this morning, during the briefing during the Executive Committee. But you know shifting stocks and reallocation, and this idea of fisheries disaster efficiency and improving that is included here.

There is the notion of recreational data issue, it's talked about in a number of places in this document, as well as NOAA Organic action and a number of others. Those are all included here, and we obviously just anything, if new acts or other things come up that aren't listed here, it doesn't mean we won't react to them, we'll continue to react. These are the areas that we know right now that we'll need to work on.

Under support for management activities, which is appropriations. We'll just continue to highlight the important issues and line items within the federal budget, that we always bring forward, essentially the Atlantic Coastal Act and IJF and NEMAP funding and SEAMAP funding, and all the others that are listed there.

We'll continue to work on the partnership with USGS, it's highlighted in here and a number of places. They've been, I say extremely supportive of ASMFC, and able to provide and bring a number of scientists to the scientific priorities of the Commission and our partnership with USGS has been great. We've been able to get a lot of information. We're going to move that, try to actually get some support and funding pushed into USGS to further support that partnership. Then under partnership, it just again highlights the partnerships with Fish and Wildlife Service and USGS, as well as NOAA Fisheries and others. Those

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are the highlight of the legislative section. I would say there is going to be a lot of action this year. We'll react to it as we need to.

CHAIR WOODWARD: All right, Alexander, I see your hand raised. Go ahead.

MR. ALEXANDER LAW: Yes, one thing to add, with meeting with members in your District is, this is particularly important for highlighting legislation such as RAWLA or Recovering America's Wildlife Act. In showing some of the on the ground examples that that funding can help support, support partnership and stuff like that.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Alexander. Any questions for Bob? Seeing none; last but certainly not least, Goal 8, Laura.

MS. LAURA LEACH: As you all know, Goal 8 is the, ensure the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission, which is an ongoing process, and so there aren't a lot of new tasks every year. We do what we do. But under manage operations and budgets. We did add some tasks. One is work with member states to effectively and efficiently administer Atlantic right whales, lobster, Congressional funding, which we've got two Cooperative Agreements right now for that.

One for the 14 million, which is already ongoing, and then the 26 million, which actually turned into 56 million, because we just added a second year, so I think that is a four or five year. That's how the feds wanted to do it. The second one is to assist member states in distributing fisheries disaster funds as requested, and Doug alluded to that earlier.

We're happy to do it, we can do it easily and quickly, so happy to help. Then complete distribution of remaining CARES needs CAA funding and respond to audit requirements as necessary. The rest of the tasks are ongoing. Under managing the resources, I did add, if

necessary, they continue to refine the telecommute policy if necessary, and that's it.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Thank you, Laura. Any questions for Laura, specific on Goal 8, or any questions about the overall Action Plan. John.

MR. CLARK: Laura, just curious. What is ASMFC's telecommute policy, since that is a big issue for all of us?

MS. LEACH: What is ASMFC's telecommute policy. Staff is required to be in the office one day a week.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: That is the basis, but a lot of staff are in more than one day a week, and we're kind of letting it go organically, and see where we settle out. It seems to be working pretty well where we are right now.

CHAIR WOODWARD: All right, any other questions? As you can tell, it's another ambitious and very active year ahead of us, so I say tighten up your seatbelts and get ready for a ride, because it's coming. At this point, there are no further questions, I'll entertain a **motion to approve the 2024 Action Plan.**

Pat Keliher, second from John Clark. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none; is there **any opposition to the motion? Seeing none; the motion passes by unanimous consent,** thank you all.

REVIEW DRAFT 2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

CHAIR WOODWARD: We'll move on, and now I'm going to turn it over to Bob to talk about the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: A Draft document with a number of edits is included also in the supplemental material for this Business Session meeting. I don't think I'm going to go through all the edits that are suggested there. It would be a little bit tedious and painful. But talking with Spud and Joe and staff at the Commission. We've all kind

of come to the agreement or perspectives that this document does not need a major rewrite right now.

You know the overall goals that we just went through as part of the action plan, and the driving forces are fairly similar to what they were five years ago. You know it's the core function of ASMFC is still pretty similar to what it was a few years ago. There are some changes that I'll highlight a little bit, but that's kind of the idea here. The other, the timing is, we're not seeking approval of this document today.

What we would like to do is introduce it and hit a couple of the highlights in this document. Folks can go home and think about it for a month or so. We'll send out a reminder e-mail to provide feedback to us on this, and then we'll bring an edited version back to the meeting at the winter meeting, and that is when we'll seek approval from the Business Session on this document.

It is a living document, and you know the edits in here right now reflect conversations with Spud and Joe, as well as the edits from each of the staff members that actually you just heard presenting the Action Plan. With that I'll kind of go through a couple quick highlights in here. A couple major themes that we've done is we used to say changing ocean conditions, now we're just saying it's climate change.

We'll just be more direct about that. That's what we're dealing with, dealing with climate change. We have to react to that. The other thing that's woven in throughout this is that scenario planning, climate change project that went on for the last few years. There is a number of recommendations that came out of that process that relate to sort of being more nimble, and able to quickly react to climate change within our management process.

Those concepts again, are woven in here in a number of places. We're not suggesting changing the vision or the mission at this point,

where there again, the situation really hasn't changed much as it was in the past five years. Driving forces, we've maintained the main topics there again, but highlighting climate-induced changed and climate change. Things are happening quickly, and it's effecting, essentially everything that this Commission does, in one way or another. You know there are a number of species there that are examples of climate change and species that have been significantly impacted in their distribution and/or productivity from climate change, just to highlight those species for consideration. At the end of that section on climate change, we've added a paragraph that is really reflective of the Scenario Planning Process, and some of the output of that is that we can continue to consider during this five-year period that Strategic Plan.

The other driving force is pretty unchanged, allocation, science as a foundation of our decisions, ecosystem functions, competing ocean uses, protected species. Those are all still key pieces of what we do. Whether we want to or not, we can't avoid them, they are going to influence what we're up to. Then increased collaboration among the states and our federal partners is obviously a key part of this, and we've seen a couple areas where we've got some concerns.

A strained relationship between states and federal partners in some areas, we want to continue to work on those. The goals and objectives overall, again we have not changed the eight goals that are in here. We've adjusted some wording within some of the goals, but overall, they are fish policy, fish science, fish data and on down the line of outreach and law enforcement, habitat, legislative and the financial administration portion of this.

The only thing I'm going to highlight within these goals is Goal 8. You know we had some discussion at staff, and this is what Laura just talked about, the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission. You know we have a choice. We have to manage the Commission efficiently.

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We have to do these financial, you know all the grant processing and cooperative agreements, travel, reimbursement, meeting planning. All those things are really nonnegotiable, we have to do that. We're considering making Goal 8 much simpler and very basic, and just sort of noting that we've got to do those things.

That's the only goal that we were considering making a fairly significant change too, but still capturing the concept that responsible administration of the Commission is obviously critically important. But it's kind of an ongoing activity year to year, and there is not a whole lot of change within that goal.

Again, happy to answer any questions, and if you guys know or feel there is anything that should be added or taken out, or if you have comments right now, we would love to hear it. But I think maybe a month or so timeline to get comments back. We can process those and get them woven into a document for consideration at the winter meeting.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Questions for Bob or comments? Lynn.

MS. LYNN FEGLEY: I just wonder on Goal 8. You know we have these conversations around the table from time to time about, you know using the Commission as a bank, and you know you guys are, the floor shop is magnificently helpful. But I wonder if it would be useful for you, in order to prevent any kind of mission creep in being a little, I don't know if there is some sort of guard rail you want to put in there, into what sort of services you're willing to offer, because you guys are amazing. Every time we ask for help, you know you guys just step up and really bail us out of some tight spots. But at a certain spot you might find yourself unable to accommodate that. I don't know if that would be helpful for you in the long run or not.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, I think that's a good idea, and maybe in hindsight, if there is another pandemic, we may treat any pandemic

assistance very differently than we did this time. No, I think it's good. You know there is a lot of work there, and people have started calling us the Atlantic States Marine Fiscal Commission, and taking out fish. We'll think about that. I think it's a good idea to make sure it doesn't get too overwhelming.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Any other questions about process? I certainly encourage you to dive into this and give us all the benefit of the collective wisdom, so Erika.

MS. BURGESS: I wanted to ask a few questions about Board changes under the values, and I appreciate that this is all done in short changes. I'm of the general mindset that sweeping changes probably are not necessary at this time. In the second sentence that is changed to say that the Commission is committed to the sustainable fishery management for the benefit of recreational and commercial industries, and it removes reference to anglers and harvesters.

I was curious if it actually is the Commission's value to manage for the benefit beyond the harvester stage. The current industry seems like it could creep a lot further than the role and responsibility of conservation of our resources. I wanted to bring that up for discussion.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Erika, that is a great point. The reason we made these edits was it didn't really include the for-hire industry before, it was just anglers and commercial fishermen. Fishermen may be not the right term anymore either. We were looking for something that was more, a broader umbrella to sort of say all fishing activities, and we want to manage for the good of those.

If you are reading that as if this appears to be too broad and it's looking at whatever, processors and dealers. You know it may be extending beyond what our management ability and priorities are. I'm open for wording, suggestions for sure. But that's the rationale why we made that change. But if there is a better way to say it, we're open, for sure.

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CHAIR WOODWARD: Again, that's why I encourage folks to take a look at it, be thoughtful about it and provide some feedback, and we'll have a chance to review this and discuss it further at the winter, 2024 meeting. No action is required on this at this point.

ELECT COMMISSION CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

CHAIR WOODWARD: If there is no further discussion on that, I am going to call on Bob to conduct the election of officers.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: I detect some glee in your voice there, Mr. Chairman. This is the part that Spud referred to earlier on Monday evening, which is vote early, vote often, I think is where we are here. But before I get into the actual election itself, I want to present our outgoing chair, that is what we assume will happen here, with a commemorative clock, you know on behalf of all 45 Commissioners and staff, thank you for the last two years.

Most folks don't know this, but Spud and Joe and I have a conversation every Monday morning at like ten. I don't know if it's a planning session or therapy session, or what it is. But it works out really well, and I'll miss those conversations with Spud. We've had a lot of fun with those conversations. I think we got a lot done, and really appreciate it. Somehow, you were able to pull off all eight meetings in person. The previous chair, for some reason, wasn't able to do that, Mr. Keliher. You can be very proud of that. But again, on behalf of all the Commissioners and staff, I just want to thank you for the last two years. We really appreciate all the hard work. (Applause)

CHAIR WOODWARD: I've got some remarks I'll make tomorrow at Policy Board in a little more detail. But I want to thank everybody for the support and the honor of being Vice-Chair and Chair of this organization. It's a significant milestone in my life. I certainly appreciate it. I do very much appreciate Joe and Bob's patience on those Monday morning calls.

I would wax philosophical about the state of the world, the state of fisheries management, all these other things. Like he said, it was very therapeutic. It helped me kind of start my week off on, kind of like shaking up a bottle of Mountain Dew and you've got to ease the cap off, if you want the liquid to stay in the bottle. That was very important. Thank you all, it's just been an honor.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: I should have said this earlier, but it's worth noting that Spud is the first Governor's Appointee that has been Chair at the Commission for a long time. He put in all this time, completely as a volunteer. He wasn't part of his other job that he is being paid to do, and really appreciate all the many, many hours he's put into this. Thanks again, Spud. With that, I will call on the Chair of the Nominations Committee, Pat Keliher, for a report on the Chair nominations.

PATRICK C. KELIHER: Congratulations, Spud, on a really steady hand on the wheel here and guiding us through. You know the transition from COVID back into somewhat of a real world. On behalf of the Nominations Committee, we have two very excellent candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair.

Before bringing those forwards, I just would like to thank members of the Nomination Committee, Erika Burgess and John Clark. We spent days and days talking about this. We were all tasked at reaching out to our federal administrative commissioners, who in return were supposed to have those conversations with their governors and legislative appointees.

Very clear, based on the work of the two individuals that we have that we have two people who will continue to give strong guidance to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. With that, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present our **nomination for Chair of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission as Joe Cimino from New Jersey.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Thank you, Pat, for that report. Laura is going to **hand out the ballots now, one vote per state.** If you need to caucus with somebody who is not in the room, please do

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that. Please fill out the ballot, have one person from your delegation sign it, I believe, then we'll round those ballots up and count off the votes. The ballots are in, the accounting firm of Leach and Associates has counted them up, and **it is unanimous, no write in votes, Joe has been unanimously elected as the next Chair of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.** I will go back to Pat Kelliher for a report on Vice-Chair nominations.

MR. KELIHER: As is customary, we always try to ensure that leadership is shared geographically, up and down the coast. This being the northeast turn in line for Vice-Chair, and after consulting with the members of the Nomination Committee, we're pleased to **nominate Dan McKiernan as Vice-Chair.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Thank you, Pat, we'll go through the same routine. Laura is going to **pass out the ballots**, and we will **collect them and count them up. The votes for Vice-Chair, again is unanimous, and Dan McKiernan has been elected as the next Vice-Chair of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.** Congratulations, Dan! With that I will turn the microphone back over to our previous Chair to close out the Business Session.

CHAIR WOODWARD: Dennis, you have a comment?

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: Yes, thank you, before you go any further. Having been here for a long time. It was always my understanding that we rotated between north and south, whatever that was. This year it seemed like we had a conversation that Pat just stated someone from the northeast, while Spud from the south is leaving.

I have no concern about who we selected or how we did it. I had again in my mind, I thought we were going to go to the south. Now we're talking about having three distinct areas, mid, northeast and south, apparently. I see that

limiting some of the state directors to be given the opportunity to be Chair or Vice-Chair, because you end up in sort of, you have to be around for eight years to get the Vice-Chair, Chair and so on and so forth.

It takes a long time for it to rotate back, you know to the different geographical areas. My thought is, we should eliminate the distinction between north and south and mid. If there are qualified candidates from any state, I think that is who we should be selecting. If we think about it, there is really no good reason to have to go north or south.

You think of the problems that have come up in the past, where you have a Vice-Chair speaking Maine and you have a Chair speaking Georgia. You know it causes difficulties. I guess I didn't even get a laugh out of that. I do think that we should formalize the nominating process, and eliminate the need for making a selection from any geographical area. That is just my thoughts, I don't know if anyone shares them. But that is what my thoughts are.

CHAIR WOODWARD: I'm going to let Bob sort of speak to that process.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Thanks, Dennis, for those comments. The most recent version of the nominating process and election process, as you said, does contemplate three regions. But it also, I don't have it open in front of me, but it states that as more of a goal than a requirement. It says, the Commission should elect the best person for leadership, regardless of what state they are from. But if available we should try to rotate through the three regions. It does contemplate this, elect the best person wherever they come from, but try to spread it out over the years. I think some of what you said is woven in there. I can dig out the election process and share it with everyone, and we can see if it needs updating.

MR. ABBOTT: Yes, if I may. Where is that written down that nominating process, and how did that come to pass that we went to three states?

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: I don't recall if it was developed by the Executive Committee or the Full Commission, but I know we modified that probably 15 years ago, and we really haven't changed it since. It's dated at this point. We can dig it out and share it with everyone, and we can put that on the agenda for the winter meeting, just to look it over and make sure it reflects what everybody wants.

MR. ABBOTT: Again, as I say, I have no real problem, but I'm just trying to think of how we would be better off if we didn't have a distinction geographically.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR WOODWARD: I want to conclude. We don't have a gavel up here, as you all noticed, to pass on. But your newly elected Vice-Chair felt like there needed to be some sort of emblematic transfer, so he's provided this very delicate balloon here, which I believe represents the new, which is Joe, and I'm providing him this container of Froot Loops as a reflection of what he'll be having to do over the next couple of years. With that, you are formally anointed now as the Chair.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m. on October 18, 2023)

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Proposed Revision to the 2024 Action Plan



Approved by the Business Session

October 18, 2023

Goal 1 – Rebuild, maintain and fairly allocate Atlantic coastal fisheries

Goal 1 focuses on the responsibility of the states to conserve and manage Atlantic coastal fishery resources for sustainable use. Commission members will advocate decisions to achieve the long-term benefits of conservation, while balancing the socio-economic interests of coastal communities. Inherent in this is the recognition that healthy and vibrant resources mean more jobs and more opportunity for those that live along the coast. The states are committed to proactive management, with a focus on integrating ecosystem services, socioeconomic impacts, habitat issues, bycatch and discard reduction measures, and protected species interactions into well-defined fishery management plans (FMPs). FMPs will also address fair (equitable) allocation of fishery resources among the states. Understanding global climate change and its impact on fishery productivity and distribution is an elevated priority. Improving cooperation and coordination with federal partners and stakeholders can streamline efficiency, transparency, and, ultimately, success. In the next five years, the Commission is committed to making significant progress on rebuilding overfished or depleted Atlantic fish stocks.

Fisheries management and stock assessment activities anticipated for 2024 and into 2025 are outlined below. Activities are divided into high priority species (those with significant management action, stock assessment activity, or are of critical importance to the states and their stakeholders) and medium-low priority species. For most species, there are several activities that occur on an annual or ongoing basis, including specification setting; FMP review and state compliance reports; and ensuring cooperation and consistent management programs among the states, regional councils, and NOAA Fisheries for shared resources. While ongoing activities are not listed below, they continue to be conducted. The focus of the Action Plan is to highlight new and high-profile activities where the Commission will focus its resources and energies for the next two years.

HIGH PRIORITY SPECIES FOR 2024

American Eel

- Draft and finalize an addendum to consider changes to the coastwide catch level for yellow eel, in response to the recent benchmark stock assessment
- Draft and finalize an addendum to address Maine’s glass eel quota
- Monitor international action on the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species through communications with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

American Lobster

- Initiate benchmark stock assessment for completion in 2025
- Work with partners and ACCSP on implementing and integrating tracking device data collection as part of Addendum XXIX
- Update annual indices of stock abundance and settlement and respond, if necessary
- Consider developing a management strategy evaluation to inform future management
- Continue to monitor and respond as necessary to NOAA rulemaking on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan modifications
- Continue to work with the Law Enforcement Subcommittee, the states, and NOAA Fisheries to improve enforcement of management measures in both state and offshore waters

- Work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistency in state and federal regulations

Atlantic Croaker

- Conduct and present traffic light analysis, and respond if necessary
- Review and present benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary

Atlantic Striped Bass

- Finalize and implement Addendum II on reduction in recreational and commercial measures
- Conduct and present stock assessment update, and respond if necessary
- Develop alternatives for bag limit, size limit and season analysis for effort controls

Black Sea Bass

- Continue addressing recreational management reform in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), including:
 - Conduct scoping hearings and begin developing Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment
- Continue development of Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda and conduct public hearings
- Present management track stock assessment, and respond if necessary

Bluefish

- Continue addressing recreational management reform in collaboration with MAFMC, including:
 - Conduct scoping hearings and begin developing Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment
 - Continue development of the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda and conduct public hearings
- Implement new management uncertainty tool in collaboration with MAFMC

Cobia

- Initiate development of management action to address recreational quota reallocation based on increasing catch of cobia in Mid-Atlantic states
- Collaborate with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) and the states to conduct 2026 stock assessment

Horseshoe Crab

- Set 2025 Delaware Bay bait harvest specifications using the Adaptive Resource Management Framework Revision
- Consider Work Group input on Delaware Bay management goals, and respond if necessary
- Conduct and present stock assessment update, and respond if necessary
- Secure long-term funding for the Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl Survey for use in the ARM Framework

Red Drum

- Present benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary

Scup

- Continue addressing recreational management reform in collaboration with MAFMC, including:
 - Conduct scoping hearings and begin developing Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment
 - Continue development of Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda and conduct public hearings
 - Monitor management and research activities of MAFMC including, but not limited to, scup discards and gear restricted areas analysis

Shad and River Herring

- Conduct and present river herring benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary
- Complete updates to shad sustainable fishery management plans
- Complete updates to shad habitat plans
- Monitor management activities of MAFMC and New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) including, but not limited to, shad and river herring catch caps and bycatch avoidance programs

Summer Flounder

- Continue addressing recreational management reform in collaboration with MAFMC, including:
 - Conduct scoping hearings and begin developing Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Accounting Amendment
 - Continue development of the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda and conduct public hearings
- Develop an Addendum in collaboration with MAFMC to address the flynet definition and boundaries of the small-mesh exemption area

MEDIUM-LOW PRIORITY SPECIES

Atlantic Herring

- Monitor and respond if necessary to NEFMC activities including Amendment 10 to address spatial and temporal allocation and management of Atlantic herring at the management unit level to minimize user conflicts, contribute to optimum yield and support rebuilding of the resource Continue to improve coordination and collaboration with NEFMC
- Conduct meetings as necessary to establish state effort control (days-out) programs for Area 1A
- Explore funding options for biological sampling program

Atlantic Menhaden

- Initiate single-species stock assessment update to be completed in 2025 Continue work on ecological reference point (ERP) benchmark stock assessment for peer review in 2025

Atlantic Sturgeon

- Conduct and present stock assessment update, and respond if necessary
- Monitor state and federal activities in response to an Endangered Species Act listing, including 5-year status reviews and recovery plans
- Monitor federal activities in response to the Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries

Black Drum

- Update and present indicators of fishery performance and indices of abundance, and respond if necessary

Coastal Sharks

- Monitor activities of NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division with regards to coastal shark management actions and consider development of complementary management actions as needed for consistency, including monitoring HMS Amendment 14 (annual catch limits and accountability measures), and proposed rule to consider prohibiting retention of sharks listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act
 - Initiate addendum to consider moving oceanic whitetip shark to the prohibited species group, if necessary

Jonah Crab

- Work with ACCSP and partners on implementing and integrating tracking device data collection as part of Addendum IV
- Per the 2023 Peer Review Report, evaluate possible management measures or other options to address what appears to be deficiencies in the stock

Northern Shrimp

- Present results of 2023 traffic light analysis, and respond if necessary
- Continue to explore long-term management options given environmental changes in the Gulf of Maine and depleted stock status
- Consider development of management action to consider implementation of an ongoing moratorium until resource improves
- Continue development of management triggers and “wake-up index” to indicate when the stock can support a commercial fishery

Spanish Mackerel

- Consider development of management action to address differences between state and federal management plans in collaboration with South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)
- Monitor activities of SAFMC with regards to the Framework Amendment addressing acceptable biological catch limits
- Work in collaboration with SAFMC to plan and conduct Spanish mackerel and king mackerel port meetings
- Develop a white paper characterizing recreational and commercial Spanish mackerel fisheries along the Atlantic coast

Spiny Dogfish

- Present management track stock assessment and respond, if necessary, in collaboration with NEFMC and MAFMC
- Collaborate with NEFMC and MAFMC on changes to the Interstate FMP if changes to the federal FMP are made in response to the Action Plan to Reduce Atlantic Sturgeon Bycatch in Federal Large Mesh Gillnet Fisheries

Spot

- Conduct and present traffic light analysis, and respond if necessary
- Continue work on benchmark stock assessment for peer review in 2025

Spotted Seatrout

No new tasks

Tautog

- Continue to monitor the implementation of the commercial harvest tagging program to reduce illegal harvest and consider modifications if necessary

Weakfish

- Initiate stock assessment update to be completed in 2025

Winter Flounder

No new tasks

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

- Continue to monitor impacts of changes to Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES) design and data presentation standards relative to Commission FMPs and stock assessments
- Continue to update existing management programs to address the concerns of the recreational community with regard to Commission-managed and jointly-managed species
- Continue to work with the states and NOAA Fisheries on changes to the Take Reduction Plan for North Atlantic right whale
- Monitor developments related to changing ocean conditions, ocean acidification, stock distributions, ecosystem services, ocean planning and potential fisheries reallocations
- Continue to explore allocation strategies for the Commission's quota-managed species to reflect current fishery conditions
- Explore the development of a guidance or policy-level document on allocation and use of mode splits
- Consider strategies for increasing responsiveness in management to climate change
- Participate in the East Coast Climate Coordination Group to track progress of the Draft Potential Action Plan

- Provide support for the Climate Innovation Group to track information and changes relevant to East Coast fisheries, identify ideas that are worthy of consideration by the Coordination Group, and identify new possible actions to undertake in the Draft Action Plan
- Develop joint management agreement with MAFMC to clarify roles and increase efficiency on collaborative projects

Goal 2 – Provide the scientific foundation for stock assessments to support informed management actions

Sustainable management of fisheries relies on accurate and timely scientific advice. The Commission strives to produce sound, actionable science through a technically rigorous, independently peer-reviewed stock assessment process. Assessments are developed using a broad suite of fishery-independent surveys and fishery-dependent monitoring, as well as research products developed by a coastwide network of fisheries scientists at state, federal, and academic institutions. The goal encompasses the development of new, innovative scientific research and methodology, and the enhancement of the states' stock assessment capabilities. It provides for the administration, coordination, and expansion of collaborative research and data collection programs. Achieving the goal will ensure sound science is available to serve as the foundation for the Commission's evaluation of stock status and adaptive management actions.

Several fisheries science activities occur on an annual or ongoing basis, including development of stock assessments and conducting peer reviews; stock assessment scheduling and evaluation of scientists' workloads; updating Commission research priorities and distributing to funding agencies; external research proposal reviews; development of ecological reference points models; supporting multispecies/diet data collection; fish ageing and tagging programs; gear technology research; and participation in Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) committees. While ongoing activities are not listed below, they continue to be conducted.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

- Seek Assessment Science Committee (ASC) guidance on best practices for use of MRIP FES data in stock assessments; work with MRIP statisticians to scope magnitude of potential effort and catch estimate changes by species; during stock assessments, conduct sensitivity analyses to evaluate the effects of potential MRIP changes on model results and stock status
- Continue incorporating socioeconomic information in management documents and streamline processes for producing socioeconomic analyses through the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences
 - Participate in the development of Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Profiles
 - Develop an American lobster socioeconomic data inventory to enhance current stock and fishery indicators
- Update the ASMFC Research Priorities; work with scientific committees to write proposals and pursue funding to conduct priority research