Informational Webinar: Technical Committee Report on Updated Projections & 2025 Management Options

December 5, 2024

Overview

- Background and Timeline
- Updated Projections and 2025 Management Options
- Questions

This is an informational webinar only. No public comments will be taken during the webinar. Comments can be submitted via email to comments@asmfc.org until 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, December 10.

Board Meeting Materials (TC report starts p.74)

December 16 Meeting Page

Background

- 2024 Stock Assessment Update completed in October
- Stock remains overfished but not experiencing overfishing
- Stock rebuilding deadline is 2029
- Most likely projection scenario in the assessment report indicates fishing mortality will increase in 2025 → probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029 is <u>less than 50%</u>

Background

- Since the assessment indicates a less than 50% chance of rebuilding by 2029, Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board can change management measures through Board action (without an addendum)
- Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board will meet on December 16 to consider changing 2025 measures to increase the probability of rebuilding
- Technical Committee was tasked with updating projections and developing 2025 management options

Timeline

October 23	Board reviews 2024 Stock Assessment Update Report and tasks Technical Committee
November 13	Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee Meeting
December 5	**Informational Webinar on Technical Committee Report**
December 9	Advisory Panel Meeting
December 10	Public Comment Deadline
December 16	Board Meeting

ASMFC Management Boards

- 3 Commissioners from each state
- Each state has one vote

Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board:

- Maine through North Carolina
- District of Columbia
- Potomac River Fisheries Commission
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service

Technical Committee Report: Projections and Reductions

Projections and Reductions

- TC Task 1A: Update assessment projection with additional data to determine the 2025 reduction needed to achieve a 50% probability of rebuilding the stock by 2029

- Board also tasked the TC with extra projections for comparison only

Projections and Reductions

- Projection scenario of interest indicates low fishery removals in 2024, followed by an increase in fishing mortality (*F*) in 2025, and then a decrease/stabilization of *F* from 2026-2029
- Three components to consider:
  - What data are used to estimate 2024 removals?
  - How high will *F* increase in 2025?
  - How low will *F* decrease in 2026-2029?

2024 Removals

- Need to estimate this year's 2024 fishery removals under Addendum II measures
- Assessment report extrapolated preliminary MRIP data for Waves 2-3 (Mar/Apr and May/June) to estimate 2024 removals
  - 2024 removals = 3.89 million fish; F2024=0.13
- New: Wave 4 data (July/Aug) became available and was added
  - 2024 removals = 3.67 million fish; F2024=0.12

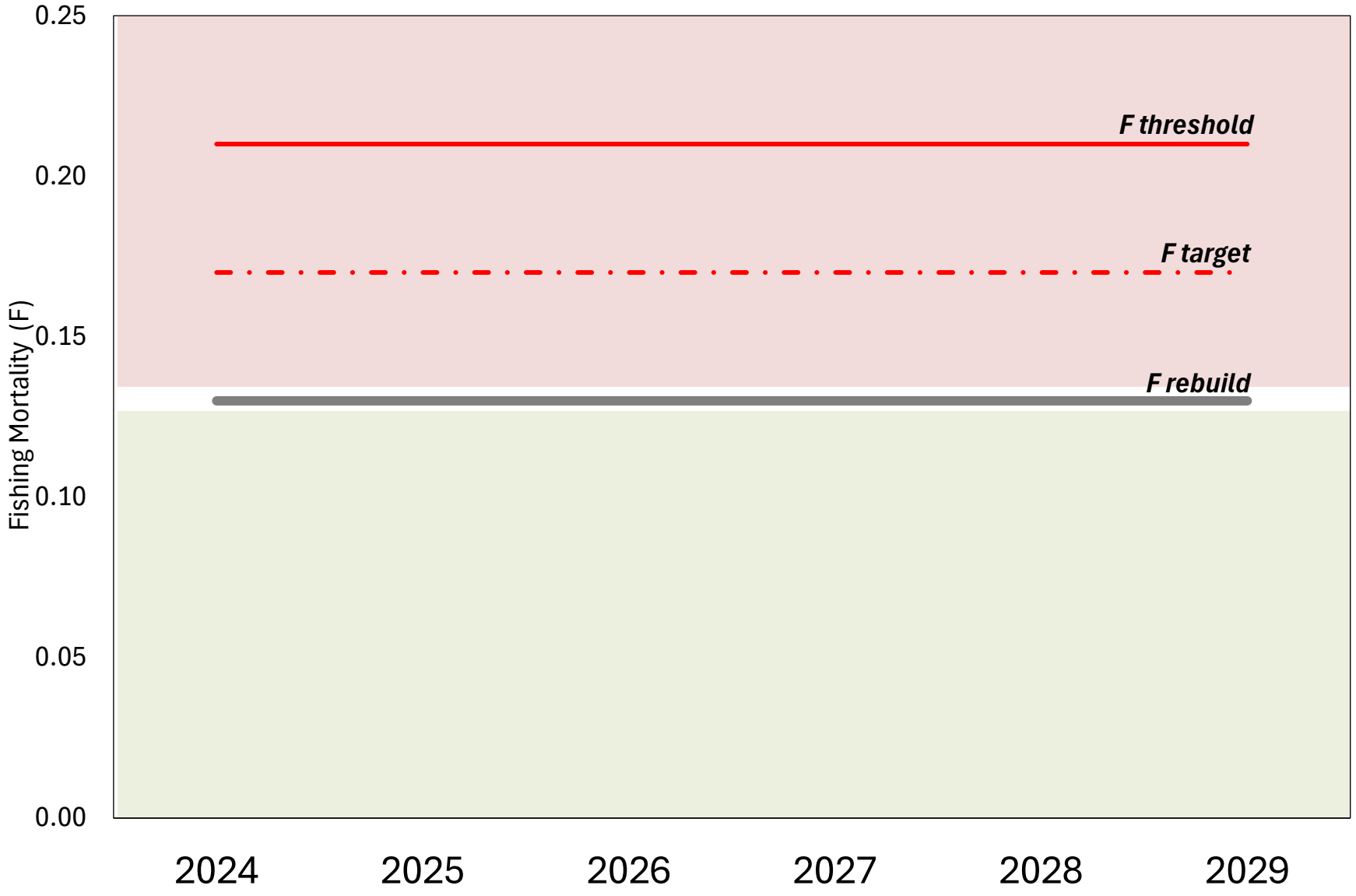
2025 Increase

- Assuming no management intervention, *F* estimated to increase in 2025 due to the 2018 year-class entering the ocean slot limit
- Assume *F* increases by +17% in 2025
  - Same magnitude as increase from 2021 to 2023 with 2015 year-class in the narrow 28-31” slot
  - This may be an overestimate since 2018s are not as strong as 2015s
- 2025 increase could take rebuilding trajectory off-track unless *F* in 2026-2029 is low enough to offset the increase

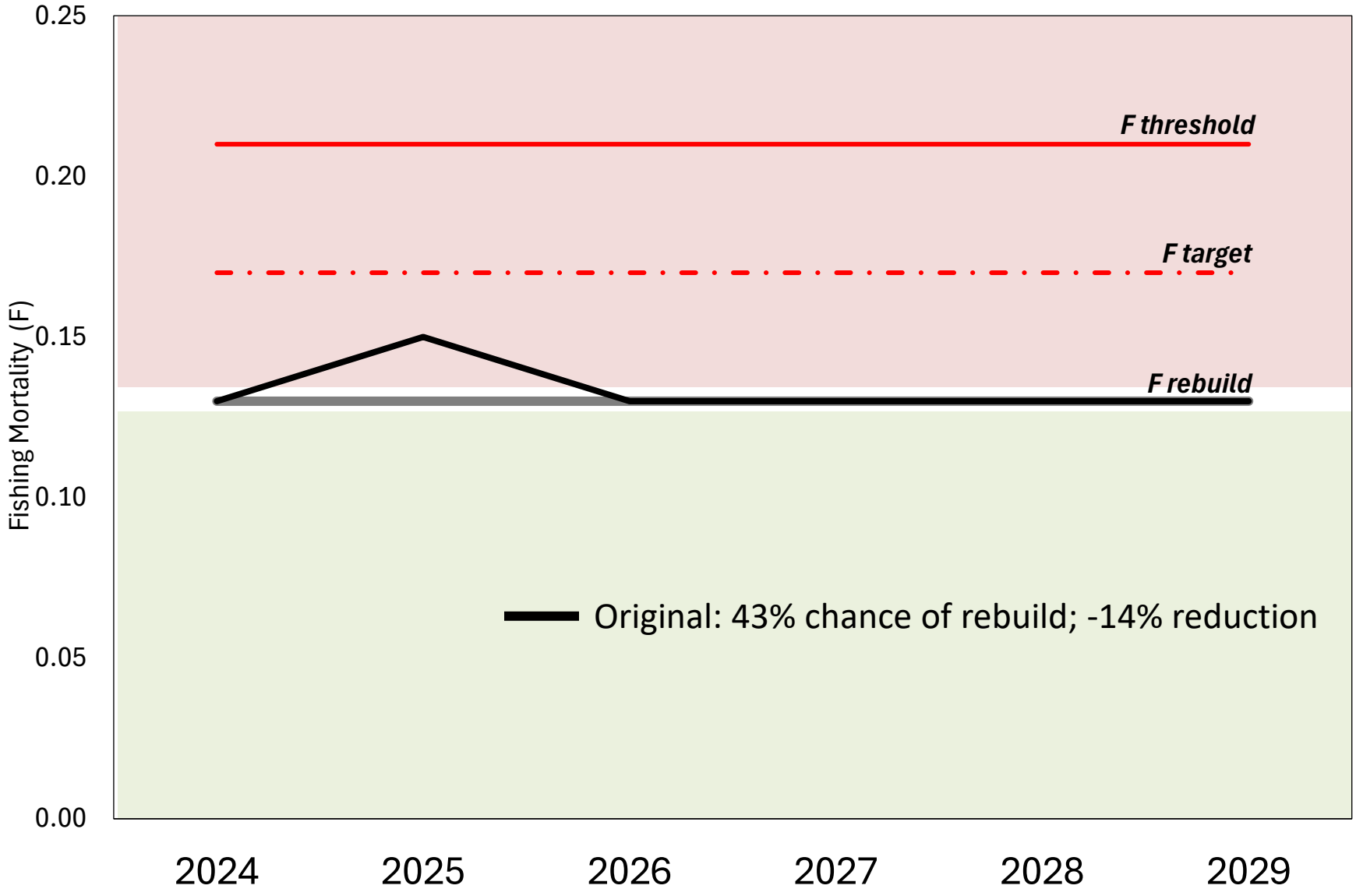
2026-2029 Decrease

- Assume *F* decreases/stabilizes from 2026-2029 due to 2018 year-class growing out of the slot limit and no strong year classes behind it
- How low will *F* decrease for 2026-2029? Low enough to offset the 2025 increase?

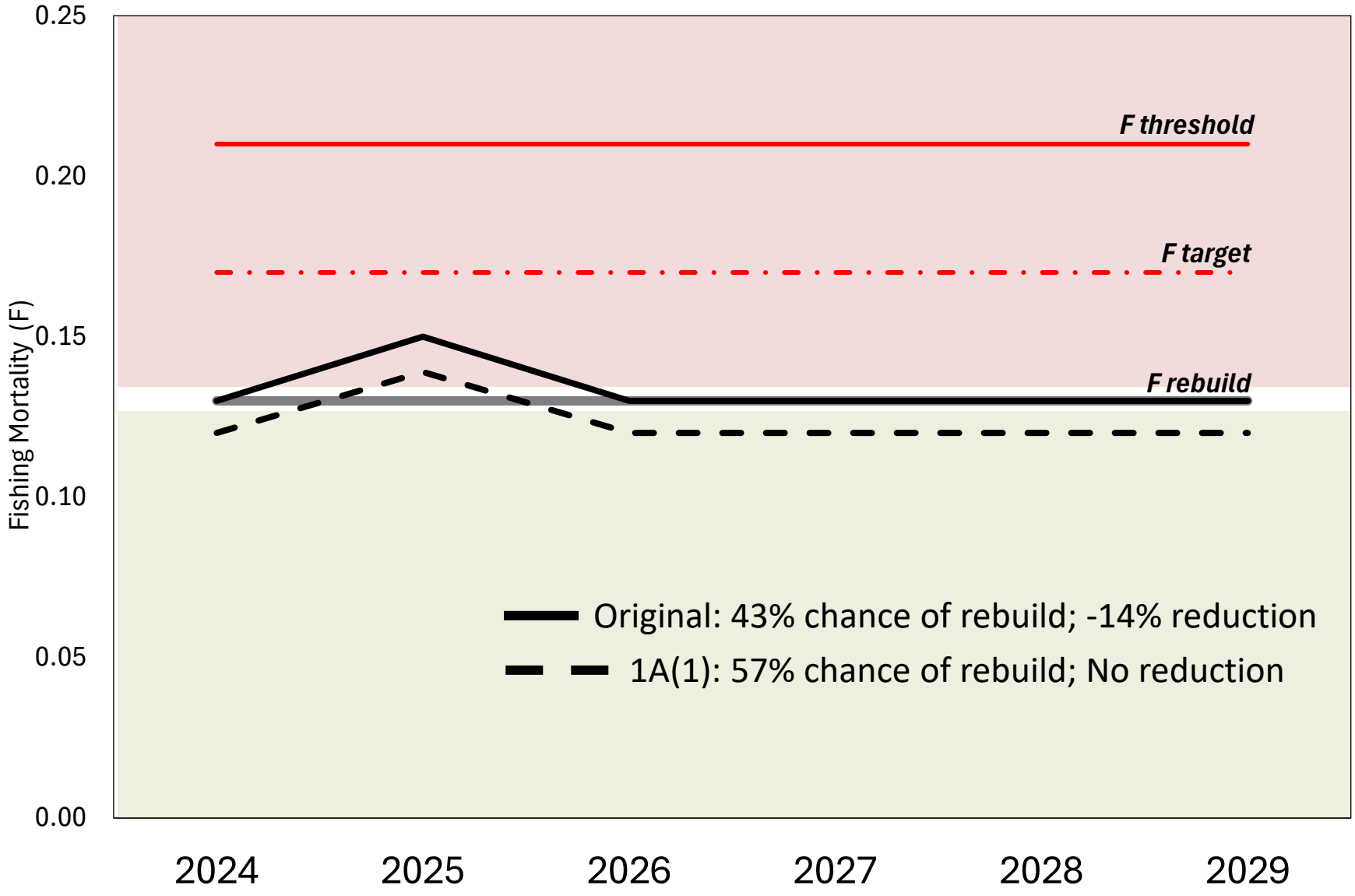
Fishing Mortality (*F*) Scenarios



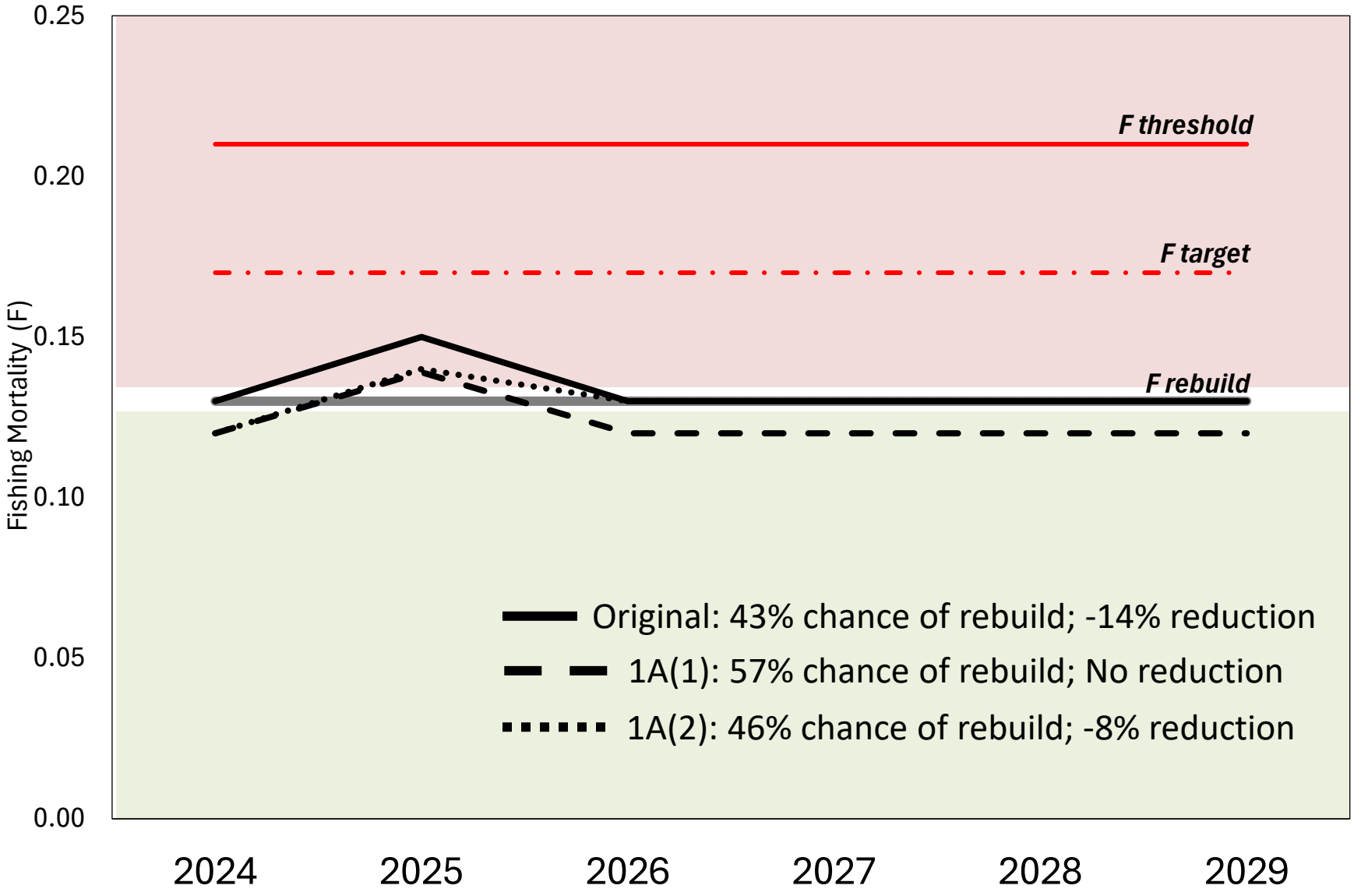
Fishing Mortality (*F*) Scenarios



Fishing Mortality (*F*) Scenarios



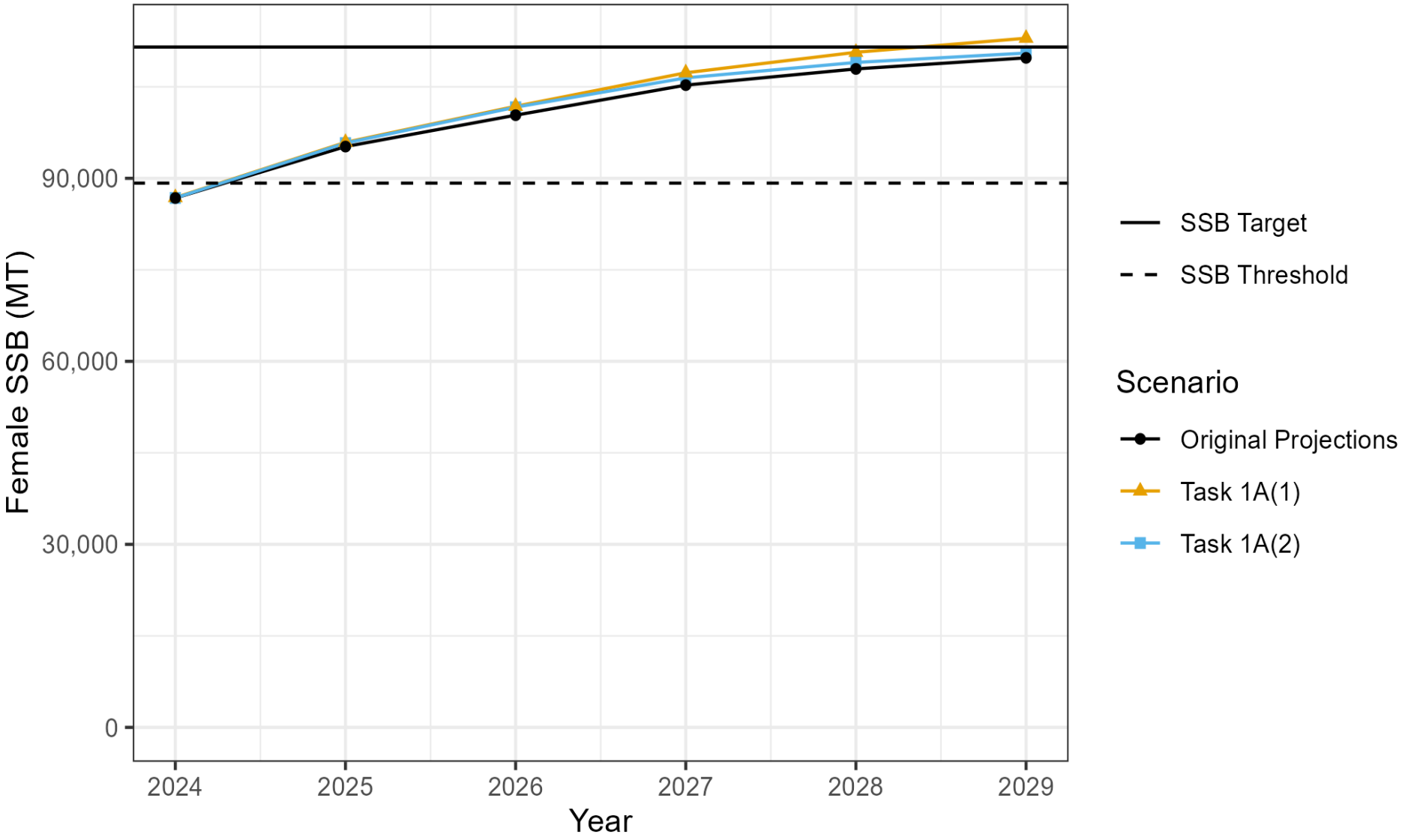
Fishing Mortality (*F*) Scenarios



Scenarios

Scenario	2024 MRIP Data	F2026-2029 Decrease After 2025 Increase	Probability of Rebuild	Reduction in Removals for 2025
Original	Waves 2-3	F=0.13	43%	-14%
Task 1A (1)	Waves 2-4	F=0.12	57%	0%
Task 1A (2)	Waves 2-4	F=0.13	46%	-8%

Spawning Stock Biomass Trajectory



2025 Reduction

- The probability of achieving rebuilding by 2029 range from 57% to 43% across the three primary scenarios, which equate to reductions ranging from 0% to 14%
- TC notes all three scenarios represent a credible range of what might happen
- Board should consider its risk tolerance when considering possible management response for 2025
- **The level of risk the Board is willing to accept (with respect to resource status, economic loss, and persistent modeling uncertainty due to annual management changes) is a management decision**

Considering Smaller Reductions and Overall Uncertainty

Note on Small Reductions

- Management changes designed to achieve small changes (e.g., reduction less than 10%) would be difficult to measure given uncertainty in MRIP estimates
- Reduction less than 10% would not be statistically distinguishable from status quo

Uncertainty in 2024 Removals

- One difference in projection scenarios is 2024 starting point, either based on Waves 2-3 or Waves 2-4
- Using Waves 2-4 to predict total removals for the entire year does not always result in a more accurate estimate than using Waves 2-3
- In recent years, sometimes using Waves 2-4 overestimated removals and sometimes underestimated removals

Uncertainty

- Angler behavior and fish availability are still sources of uncertainty
- The magnitude of the increase in 2025 and decrease in 2026-2029 are highly uncertain
- Projections assume constant *F* from 2026-2029, however it is difficult to maintain a constant *F* from year-to-year and difficult to predict how *F* will vary

Uncertainty

- Uncertainty around how well the 2024 selectivity curve represents actual selectivity
- Additional years of data under the same management regulations would inform a better estimate of selectivity for upcoming assessments

Technical Committee Report: Potential Management Options

Potential Management Options

- If Board proceeds with a reduction in 2025, Board would decide how to split the reduction between sectors

	Even Reductions		No Commercial Reduction		Reductions Based on Sector Contribution to Total Removals	
Total Reduction	**Comm.**	**Rec.**	**Comm.**	**Rec.**	**Comm.**	**Rec.**
-14%	-14%	-14%	0%	-16%	-1.5%	-16%
-8%	-8%	-8%	0%	-9%	-1%	-9%

Potential Management Options

- Board indicated any commercial reduction would be considered via reduction in commercial quota
- Board tasked the TC with developing size limit and seasonal closure options for the recreational sector

Recreational Size Limits

- **Tradeoffs of allowing harvest of larger fish vs. maintaining the current slot limit targeting smaller fish in the ocean**

- If ocean harvest remains in the current 28-31” slot, the remaining larger 2015s will be protected but the incoming 2018 year-class will be subject to harvest

- If harvest is shifted to larger fish, the incoming 2018s would be protected but the larger 2015s would then be subject to harvest

Recreational Size Limits

What about an ocean size limit below 28”?

- Unclear whether the biological benefit of reducing harvest of the remaining 2015s and 2018s would outweigh the biological risk of targeting immature fish under 28”

- TC analysis results indicate a 2-inch slot limit with sizes below 28” would not result in a reduction but would increase removals
  - Smaller fish are more abundant → more fish could be harvested

Recreational Size Limits

Ocean		Chesapeake Bay	
Size Limit	**Estimated Reduction Relative to Current 28-31” Slot**	**Size Limit**	**Estimated Reduction Relative to Current 19-24” Slot**
28-30” slot limit	-5%	19-23” slot limit	-4%
32-35” slot limit	-2%	19-22” slot limit	-15%
33-36” slot limit	-4%	19-21” slot limit	-26%
35” minimum size	0%	20-25” slot limit	-2%
38” minimum size	-5%	20-24” slot limit	-8%
40” minimum size	-6%	20-23” slot limit	-13%

Recreational Seasonal Closures

- Seasonal closure options (# days closed) would be in addition to existing closures

- **No-Harvest Closure**: harvest prohibited but catch-and-release fishing allowed

- **No-Targeting Closure**: all fishing for striped bass is prohibited (no catch-and-release and no harvest)

No-Targeting Closures

- Different assumptions for how no-targeting closures would reduce releases
- 1) All Striped Bass Trips Occur with New Target Species
  - All trips previously targeting striped bass, including those targeting striped bass only, would still occur but would shift to target other species (releasing striped bass incidentally at a non-targeted rate)
- 2) Eliminate Striped Bass-Only Trips
  - Trips that only targeted striped bass (no other species) would no longer occur or no longer release any striped bass

Recreational Seasonal Closures

- **Ocean**
  - All States
  - ME-MA and RI-NC
  - ME-NH and MA-NJ and DE-NC
- **Chesapeake Bay**
  - Maryland and Virginia during same Wave
  - Maryland and Virginia during different Waves
  - PRFC and DC can choose to match either Maryland or Virginia timing

Recreational Seasonal Closures

- Report includes options for various reductions for different Waves and regional/state combinations

- Note: Revised report posted today, Dec. 5, includes updates to some Chesapeake Bay closure options. In the original version, some options listed closures that exceeded Maryland and/or Virginia's current open season

Recreational Seasonal Closures

- As an example, the following slides show closure options to achieve a 14% recreational reduction (assumes equal commercial reduction)
- Report also includes options to achieve a 16% reduction (assumes no commercial reduction)
- Report includes region-specific and state-specific reductions (i.e., are various closure options having similar/different impacts on each region?)

Recreational Seasonal Closures

- **These slides are not an exhaustive list of options**
  - Showing combinations requiring the shortest closures for 14% as an example
  - Report also includes options to achieve a 16% reduction (assumes no commercial reduction) → lengthens closures by ~3-7 days and some no-harvest options not possible
  - Appendix 3 includes more comprehensive list of different region/Wave combinations for 14% reduction and 8% reduction

Ocean Closure Example for 14%

Ocean seasonal closures to achieve 14% recreational reduction (corresponding to equal commercial reduction)			
Region/Wave	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming Striped Bass-Only Trips Eliminated**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming All Striped Bass Trips Occur with New Target**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-HARVEST closure**
All Ocean States Wave 6	29 days	36 days	Cannot achieve 14% reduction closing entire wave to harvest
ME-MA Wave 3; RI-NC Wave 6	25 days	34 days	55 days
ME-MA Wave 4; RI-NC Wave 6	23 days	31 days	47 days
ME-MA Wave 5; RI-NC Wave 6	25 days	32 days	54 days

Ocean Closure Example for 14%

Ocean seasonal closures to achieve 14% recreational reduction (corresponding to equal commercial reduction)			
Region/Wave	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming Striped Bass-Only Trips Eliminated**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming All Striped Bass Trips Occur with New Target**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-HARVEST closure**
ME-NH Wave 3; MA-NJ Wave 6; DE-NC Wave 6*	28 days	36 days	61 days
ME-NH Wave 4; MA-NJ Wave 6; DE-NC Wave 6*	27 days	34 days	59 days
ME-NH Wave 5; MA-NJ Wave 6; DE-NC Wave 6*	27 days	35 days	60 days

Chesapeake Bay Closure for 14%

Chesapeake Bay seasonal closures to achieve 14% recreational reduction (corresponding to equal commercial reduction)			
Chesapeake Bay State/Wave	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming Striped Bass-Only Trips Eliminated**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming All Striped Bass Trips Occur with New Target**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-HARVEST closure**
MD and VA Wave 3	MD 33 days VA 31 days	MD 43 days VA 31 days	Cannot achieve
MD and VA Wave 5	MD 32 days VA 28 days	MD 36 days VA 28 days	MD 47 days VA 28 days
MD Wave 4; VA Wave 3	31 days	MD 35 days VA 31 days	MD 41 days VA 31 days
MD Wave 4; VA Wave 6	31 days	36 days	42 days

Chesapeake Bay Closure for 14%

Chesapeake Bay seasonal closures to achieve 14% recreational reduction (corresponding to equal commercial reduction)			
Chesapeake Bay State/Wave	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming Striped Bass-Only Trips Eliminated**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-TARGETING closure assuming All Striped Bass Trips Occur with New Target**	**# days for 14% reduction with NO-HARVEST closure**
MD Wave 5; VA Wave 3	28 days	30 days	MD 40 days VA 31 days
MD Wave 5; VA Wave 6	28 days	31 days	41 days
MD Wave 6; VA Wave 3	MD 33 days VA 31 days	MD 35 days VA 31 days	Cannot achieve

Recreational Combination Option

- Board requested calculation example for an option combining a size limit change and a seasonal closure
- Benefit of changing to a size limit with such a small estimated reduction may be limited, particularly in contrast to using a longer seasonal closure to achieve the same higher reduction
- Appendix 4 includes one example of a combination option

Wrap-Up

Board Considerations for December 16

- What level of reduction should the Board implement in 2025, if any? What level of risk is the Board willing to accept?
- For any reduction, how should the reduction be split between the recreational and commercial sectors?
- For recreational measures, should the Board change size limits and/or implement seasonal closures?
- For recreational seasonal closures, should the Board implement no-harvest closures or no-targeting closures?
  - When should those closures occur?
  - If no-targeting, which assumption about reducing releases?

Questions

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