



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Bluefish Management Board
FROM: Dustin Colson Leaning, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator
DATE: January 14, 2021
RE: Recommended Revisions to the Addendum I Biological Monitoring Program

In December 2020, the Bluefish Technical Committee (TC) presented a memo to the Bluefish Management Board (Board) with recommendations for changes to the Addendum I biological monitoring program. The recommended revisions were largely due to updated recreational data that resulted from the Marine Recreational Information Program 2018 recalibration of recreational catch estimates. At the Board's December meeting, staff held the understanding that an addendum was needed to make revisions to the biological monitoring program, but after further review of Addendum I it was determined it is possible to make revisions to the sampling requirements through board action in the form of a motion. As such, a full addendum process is not needed to achieve the Bluefish TC's recommended changes. After consultation with the Board Chair and the TC Chair, and in light of the minor and technical nature of the revisions, we have determined the best approach would be to finalize revisions to the Addendum I biological monitoring program through Board action at the meeting in February. Based on the analysis and recommendations of the Bluefish Plan Review Team (PRT) and TC, the following changes are recommended:

1. Change the threshold for required participation in the age sampling program from 5% of total coastwide bluefish harvest (1998-2008) to 4% of total coastwide bluefish removals (recreational and commercial landings and dead discards; 2010-2019). This update would add Florida to the list of states that are already required to submit age samples under Addendum I (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Florida). As was the case under Addendum I, Virginia must continue its current sampling regime for bluefish and provide the same minimum 100 samples as other states for the purposes of continuing Virginia's valuable collection of biological data used in stock assessments.
2. Change the seasonal spread of the data from a requirement to a target but still require a total of 100 samples to be collected. Specifically, the collection of 50 samples in the spring (January-June) and 50 samples in the fall (July-December) is a target. The availability of fish will be taken into consideration by the PRT and Board when reviewing annual compliance reports. States who fail to meet the seasonal sampling targets should demonstrate in their state compliance report that low bluefish availability was the primary cause for falling short of the 50 fish target and that adequate sampling efforts were made to achieve the targets.

In addition to the recommended changes to the Addendum I biological monitoring program requirements above, the TC also encourages states to do the following:

1. States that comprise greater than 4% of coastwide removals (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Florida)¹ for the period 2010-2019 are encouraged to collect recreational release length data. These data include length measurements² of recreational bluefish releases from anglers fishing from shore, private, rental, party, or charter boats. States are encouraged to consult with the TC for assistance with designing and establishing voluntary angler survey programs to collect these data.

¹ Note that Rhode Island, Connecticut and New Jersey already have voluntary angler programs in place that provide recreational release frequency data.

² Lengths collected from anglers can be either fork length or total length, but will need to ultimately be converted to fork lengths for assessment purposes.