



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 2025 Winter Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 2025 Winter Meeting
February 4-5, 2025

For more information, please
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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Press Release

**American Lobster Board Initiates Draft Addendum XXXII
to Repeal Gauge and Escape Vent Measures of Addendum XXVII**

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board initiated Draft Addendum XXXII to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster. The Addendum will consider repealing all Addendum XXVII measures pertaining to gauge and escape vent size limits. This action responds to fervent industry concerns about the potential economic impacts of an increase to the minimum gauge size in the Gulf of Maine and uncertainty with trade issues with Canada.

“Rolling back the resiliency measures in Addendum XXVII results in increased risk to the long-term viability of the lobster fishery,” states Board Chair Patrick Keliher of Maine. “This action being considered by the Board will require the Gulf of Maine lobster industry to develop management strategies to ensure the long-term health of the resource and the coastal communities that it supports.” The Gulf of Maine states also reiterated their commitment to the sustainability of the lobster fishery and working closely with the lobster industry to develop alternative conservation measures.

Addendum XXVII was approved with the goal of providing additional protection of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) spawning stock biomass through proactive conservation measures. Under Addendum XXVII, changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1, 3, and Outer Cape Cod were triggered based on observed declines in recruit abundance indices, with the original implementation date of June 1, 2024. In August 2024, the Board approved Addendum XXXI to push back the implementation date so that the series of changes to gauge and vent sizes would begin July 1, 2025. While the overall stock condition remains favorable, persistent declines in the juvenile lobster population, and now in landings, are cause for concern. Specifically, there has been a 40% decline in pre-recruits in the multiple ventless trap and trawl surveys and a 24% decline in lobster landings in Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts since peak landings in 2016.

The Draft Addendum will not consider repealing regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags in Areas 3 and 1 above the trap limit or allocation, nor v-notch possession definitions established by Addendum XXVII. The Board will consider approval of Draft Addendum XXXII for public comment in March.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR25-04

Meeting Summary

In addition to initiating Draft Addendum XXXII, the Board received an update on the ongoing stock assessment, a data update of Jonah crab stock indices, and a report on a recent meeting of the LCMA 2 Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT).

A benchmark stock assessment for American lobster is underway with results expected in October 2025. The final assessment workshop is scheduled for February 11-13 in Greenland, New Hampshire, and a peer review workshop will be held later this year.

The Jonah Crab Technical Committee (TC) Chair presented a data update of indicators selected during the stock assessment for the Offshore Southern New England (OSNE) stock, including trips landing Jonah crab, lobster/crab permits landing Jonah crab, landings, catch per trip in Rhode Island, and price per pound of Jonah crab and American lobster. The TC recommended conducting annual updates of the OSNE stock, which supports the majority of coastwide landings, to identify any concerning trends between assessments. The results of the analysis indicate stock conditions are similar to those presented as part of the assessment. There are indications market factors continue to be a dominant factor influencing fishing effort. The TC recommends identifying a process to track dealer/processor-imposed trip limits, such as state-conducted dealer interviews, that might provide context for changes in Jonah crab fishing effort or landings. The TC also recommends reevaluating the utility of Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation data from the lobster and Jonah crab research fleet as potential indicators for the next annual update.

The Area 2 LCMT (inshore Southern New England) met in January to gather input on possible alternative measures to those included in Addenda XXI and XXII. This was in response to a January 2024 Board task to the Plan Development Team to explore alternative measures to those included in Addenda XXI and XXII (i.e., trap caps) that would achieve the same goal but better align with the needs of the current fishing fleet, with consideration of recommendations from the LCMTs. The Area 2 LCMT members see no need for additional measures given the reductions in effort and landings that have occurred in LCMA 2 since Addenda XXI and XXII were implemented in 2013. They also advocated for the ability to bank additional traps with no limit on the number of federal licenses an individual can own. The Area 3 LCMT (federal offshore waters) will meet to provide recommendations in the coming months. The Board will review input from both LCMTs at its next meeting and consider a management response if necessary.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Main Motion

Move to initiate an Addendum to repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII. The other sections of Addendum XXVII will remain in effect.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Patterson.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to include repeal of v-notch possession measures for state only permit holders.

Motion made by Mr. Kane and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion fails (1 in favor, 8 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to initiate an Addendum to repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII. The other sections of Addendum XXVII will remain in effect.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion tabled.

Move to table this motion until we consider other motions to provide more detail on what is to come.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Kane. Motion passes with one in opposition (RI).

Move to request the Policy Board task the staff to prepare and send a letter to Commissioners from ME and NH, with cc to both state governors, expressing extreme disappointment with ME's decision to renege on the adoption of Addendum XXVII's minimum size increase, as originally proposed by the ME delegation and supported by the NH delegation.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes with one abstention (NOAA).

The Lobster Board suggests the letter should include the following points:

- **Acknowledge Maine officials' and industry's concern for uniform rules in the Gulf of Maine with abutting Canadian lobster fishing areas, which influenced their refusal to support the Addendum.**
- **Provide a history of the issue, justification for the proposal, charts of indices, declines in landings, years of deliberations, postponements, and delays on behalf of Maine and the industry. Note that the Maine delegation proposed the triggers to be proactive, risk-averse, and precautionary, aiming to minimize the long-term decline in the Gulf of Maine stock as occurred with the Southern New England lobster stock.**
- **Request Maine officials to begin scoping discussions with industry leaders, Maine's Marine Fisheries Advisory Council, Maine's Zone Councils, the Canadian government, and Canadian Lobster Fishing Area representatives to identify mutually agreeable conservation strategies and schedules for future Addenda.**
- **Ensure Maine entities develop consensus positions (to the degree possible) before the Board considers incorporating them in any future Addendum affecting the biological productivity of the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery.**
- **Request the Maine delegation to update the Commission at each quarterly meeting of its progress**

Tabled Main Motion

Move to initiate an Addendum to repeal all gauge and vent size changes in Addendum XXVII. The other sections of Addendum XXVII will remain in effect.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Ms. Patterson. Motion carries (7 in favor, 1 opposed, 3 abstentions).

SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Press Release

Spiny Dogfish Board Approves Addendum VII to Ensure Consistency with the Councils' Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved Addendum VII to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish. The Addendum implements measures to maintain consistency with the federal FMP in response to [Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6](#).

The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils developed Spiny Dogfish Framework Adjustment 6 in response to a 2021 Biological Opinion and 2022 Action Plan that called for reducing bycatch of Atlantic sturgeon in spiny dogfish gillnet fisheries. The coastwide Atlantic sturgeon population is made up of five distinct population segments, all of which are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and Atlantic sturgeon harvest has been under a coastwide moratorium in federal and state waters since 1998. The Commission’s Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic sturgeon maintains the moratorium through at least 2038, and while [the 2024 stock assessment update](#) showed signs of improvement, the stock remains depleted coastwide.

The Framework prohibits overnight soaks for federal spiny dogfish permit holders on gillnets with 5”-10” mesh in November and May for a certain area of state and federal waters off of New Jersey (see figure 1), as well as for gillnets of 5.25”-10” mesh in November through March in specified areas off of Maryland and Virginia (see figure 2). Addendum VII ensures consistency by applying those overnight soak restrictions for harvesters who have state spiny dogfish permits in Maryland and Virginia but do not possess a federal spiny dogfish permit. New Jersey does not issue permits by species, but due to

Figure 1: New Jersey Bycatch Hotspot Polygon – Monkfish and Spiny Dogfish

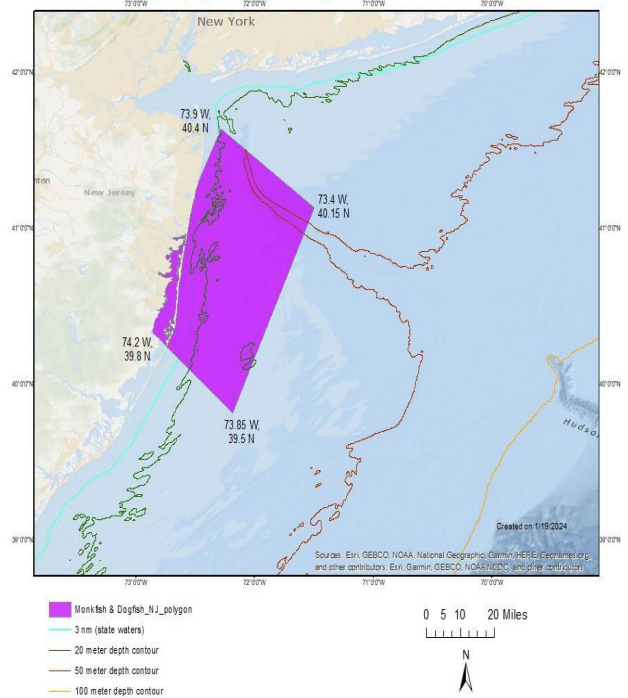
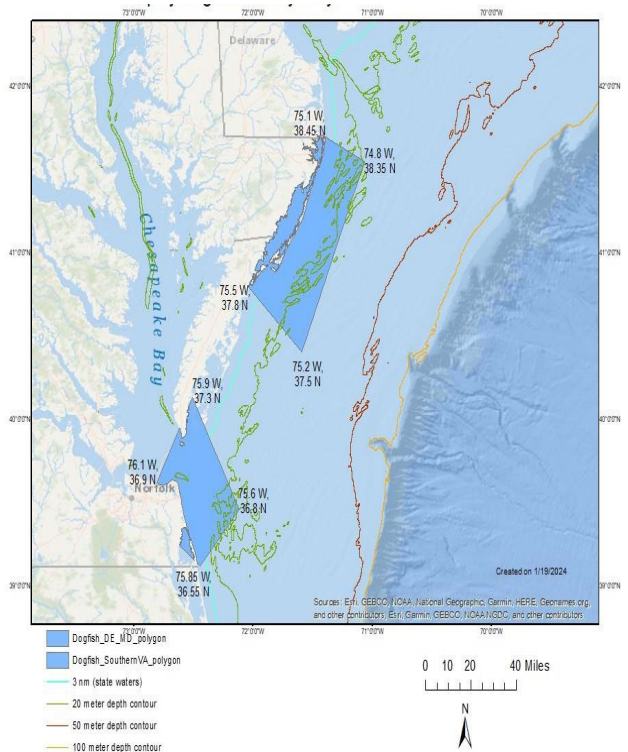


Figure 2: Delaware, Maryland and Virginia Bycatch Hotspot Polygons –



New Jersey's permitting rules, any person or vessel selling spiny dogfish in the state is required to have a federal permit and follow the regulations in the bycatch reduction area, including state waters of the area. The Addendum's measures are effective May 1, 2025.

Addendum VII will be available on the Commission's website (<https://asmfc.org>) on the Spiny Dogfish webpage in late February. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at jboyle@asmfc.org.

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PR25-06

Motions

Move to adopt Draft Addendum VII to the Spiny Dogfish management plan with Option 2: Prohibit Overnight Soaks for Specified Times and Areas for State Spiny Dogfish Permits with an implementation date effective May 1, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to amend the spiny dogfish commercial quota to 9,338,770 pounds for the 2025/2026 fishing year consistent with that adopted by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils pending approval by NOAA Fisheries.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Press Release

Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Draft Addendum IX for Public Comment to Consider Multi-Year Specifications for Male-Only Harvest

Arlington, VA – The Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved Draft Addendum IX for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers allowing the Board to set specifications for male-only harvest for multiple years. It also considers alternative methods for managing male-only harvest limits, seasonal harvest restrictions, and harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia.

Draft Addendum IX responds to recommendations from the July 2024 Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop, which convened a group of stakeholders to explore management objectives for the Delaware Bay-origin horseshoe crab fishery. The workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values. Additionally, the Draft Addendum proposes an alternative method for setting maximum male harvest limits based on Delaware Bay region spawning survey data in years when the ARM Framework is not used.

Regarding seasonal closures for the Delaware Bay region states, Draft Addendum IX includes two options: to maintain the current seasonal closure of May 1 through June 7 or reestablish the longer closure from January 1 through June 7. The Board also added options to the Draft Addendum to establish a rule for applying Maryland and Virginia harvest caps included in Addenda VII and VIII.

A press release will follow with details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum at its next meeting. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

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PR25-05

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Draft Addendum IX for public comment, the Board discussed the composition of the Advisory Panel (AP). A recommendation from the July 2024 workshop was to evaluate the AP membership to determine if the various stakeholder groups with an interest in horseshoe crab management are adequately represented. Staff recommended the states review their AP appointments and provide new nominations as needed to increase participation by the end of March. At its next meeting, the Board will consider state nominations and may solicit additional membership to achieve an even stakeholder distribution.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to add a new issue to Draft Addendum IX regarding the harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia established by Addendum VIII. The issue would include the following set of proposed options:

- **Option A: Status quo. There would be no change to the current harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia.**
- **Option B: The harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia would not apply whenever male-only harvest specifications are implemented. The caps would only apply when harvest specifications include female harvest.**

Motion made by Ms. Kennedy and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to approve Draft Addendum IX for public comment, as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to elect Carrie Kennedy as Vice Chair.

Motion made by Mr. Geer and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes.

SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Sciaenids Management Board met to review progress of the Red Drum Technical Committee (TC) on action items tasked by the Board at its October 2024 meeting. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions, as well as provide feedback and additional guidance to the TC.

The progress update included an overview of methods developed by the TC to estimate catch reductions of red drum using slot size, bag, and vessel limit changes. The TC requested feedback from the Board regarding two aspects of this analysis: 1) whether noncompliance should be accounted for in the catch reduction analysis and 2) whether an additional analysis should be conducted on the potential impacts of changing fishing effort on the estimated catch reductions. In addition, the progress update included preliminary results of a catch reduction needed by southern stock states (South Carolina, Georgia, Florida) to reach the fishing mortality target, as estimated by projections from the assessment model.

Based on this information, the Board provided additional tasks to the TC. Its tasks include directing the TC to calculate the catch reductions needed by southern stock states at several different fishing mortality rates and determine the projected timeline to achieve the spawning stock biomass threshold and target under each fishing mortality scenario. The Board charged the TC with conducting catch reduction analyses with and without the consideration of noncompliance, with the direction to not conduct any additional analyses on the potential impacts of changing effort.

The final report from the TC will be presented to the Board at its May 2025 meeting. The report will include proposed management measures from the southern stock states and how they compare to catch reductions needed to achieve each of the fishing mortality scenarios, as well as recommendations concerning next steps for the northern stock.

Additionally, the Board elected Ben Dyer of South Carolina as Vice-Chair. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at Tbauer@asmfc.org.

Motions

Main Motion

Direct the Technical Committee to calculate the catch reduction needed for the southern stock to fish at F30%, F35%, and F40% as well as the projected timeline to reach the threshold and target SSBs under each F scenario. These analyses should not incorporate effort trends and should not incorporate noncompliance.

Motion made by Ms. Owens and seconded by Mr. Woodward. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to replace “should not incorporate noncompliance with” “should include in calculations noncompliance fish as well as calculations excluding noncompliance fish.”

Motion made by Mr. Dyar and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion passes by consent.

Main Motion as Amended

Direct the Technical Committee to calculate the catch reduction needed for the southern stock to fish at F30%, F35%, and F40% as well as the projected timeline to reach the threshold and target SSBs under each F scenario. These analyses should not incorporate effort trends and should include in calculations noncompliance fish as well as calculations excluding noncompliance fish.

Motion carries by unanimous consent.

Move to elect Ben Dyar as Vice Chair of the Sciaenids Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to review and consider the stock assessment schedule; provide guidance on the scope of Draft Addendum III for 2026 management measures; and consider an Advisory Panel nomination.

The Board reviewed the timeline for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment, which is scheduled for peer review in March 2027 and will be presented to the Board in May or August 2027. Work on the benchmark stock assessment is getting underway with the Data Workshop expected this Summer 2025. The benchmark assessment will include data through 2025, including the re-calibrated MRIP time series expected to be released in Spring 2026. A 2026 stock assessment update is also tentatively scheduled per the typical two-year schedule for striped bass. However, the Technical Committee (TC) and Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) recommend not conducting a 2026 stock assessment update due to overlap with the 2027 Benchmark Assessment. This would result in TC-SAS members working on two assessments simultaneously with potentially different assessment models. Additionally, the results of a 2026 stock assessment update would quickly be replaced by the 2027 Benchmark Assessment only 6-8 months later. The Board agreed with the TC-SAS recommendation and recommended the Policy Board remove the 2026 stock assessment update from the stock assessment schedule.

The Board provided guidance to the Plan Development Team (PDT) on the scope of management options for Draft Addendum III on 2026 measures. Per the Board's motion from December 2024 initiating the addendum, the PDT will consider potential reductions based on projections incorporating preliminary estimates of 2024 removals. The Board requested options be developed for both a 50% and 60% probability of rebuilding stock. In addition, the Board requested sensitivity runs with varying assumptions for recruitment and future fishing mortality past the 2029 rebuilding deadline to provide information about potential future population trends as recent poor year-classes mature and enter the spawning stock biomass. For options to meet a 2026 reduction, the PDT will consider options for sector contributions to the reduction. For any commercial reduction, the PDT will consider commercial quota reductions. The Board added an option to consider requiring commercial tagging at the point of harvest but decided not to address commercial reallocation in this addendum.

For any recreational reduction in Draft Addendum III, the PDT will consider size limit changes and/or season closures, including mode split options, but will not consider possession limit changes as decided by the Board. For recreational size limits, the Board specified consideration of both minimum size limits and slot limits, with no slots narrower than 3" and no ocean size limits below 28". For ocean recreational season closures, options will include no-harvest and no-targeting closures and the Board requested consideration of equity from multiple perspectives, including percent reduction by region, access/seasonality by region, and socioeconomic impacts. The Board requested ocean seasonal closures options with two or three ocean regions, but an ocean region

cannot be comprised of a single state. Closures can be split between two Waves, and a coastwide closure option could be considered using this structure of a split closure. The Board also noted the PDT should consider both the shortest possible closure options and longer closure options at a different time. For the Maryland Chesapeake Bay recreational season, the Board agreed Maryland could explore a possible change to their baseline (status quo) season for review by the TC. At the 2025 Spring Meeting, the Board will consider whether to include a Maryland baseline season option in the Draft Addendum. Finally, the Board added an option to consider standardizing the method to measure total length for striped bass (i.e., pinching the tail).

The Board approved the nomination of Peter Fallon, a charter boat captain from Maine, to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to exclude recreational mode split options from Draft Addendum III

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion fails (4 in favor, 9 opposed, 3 abstentions).

Move to not include options for an ocean recreational size limit under 28" in Draft Addendum III.

Motion made by Mr. Cimino and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes (13 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to include the concepts of MD season closure baseline adjustment approach in Draft Addendum III

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion postponed.

Move to postpone the motion until the Spring Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Meeting

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes (11 in favor, 3 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Motion to include possession limit options in Draft Addendum III

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion fails (7 in favor, 7 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Motion to include possession limit options for for-hire mode split in Draft Addendum III

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion fails (7 in favor, 7 opposed, 2 abstentions).

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

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion fails (2 in favor, 12 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to approve Peter Fallon of Maine to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Rep. Hepler and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (FEBRUARY 5, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to discuss several issues, including a CARES update, a White Paper on Board Voting and Virtual Participation, and updates from the Legislative Committee and on future annual meeting locations. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- Staff provided an update on the status of the remaining issues with New Jersey and Florida CARES payments due to be repaid after audits found funds made some more than whole or they were ineligible to receive funds.
- A lengthy discussion was held on the *White Paper on Board Voting and Virtual Meeting Standard Operating Practices and Procedures*. The Committee decided to deal with Issue 3 first; Virtual and Hybrid Meeting Participation. After discussion, a motion was passed, as written below. The Committee also agreed to continue discussing the criteria for a state to "declare an interest" in a fishery and board voting practices at the next meeting.
- Staff presented to the Executive Committee on legislative successes for the Commission in the 118th Congress, challenges ahead, and on the composition of the legislative and executive branches.
- Staff provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations:
 - 2025 Annual Meeting (October 26-30) will be in Dewey Beach, Delaware
 - 2026 - Rhode Island
 - 2027 - South Carolina
 - 2028 - Massachusetts
 - 2029 - Pennsylvania
 - 2030 - Georgia

For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance & Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org.

Motions

Main Motion

For meetings where the whole of a state delegation cannot attend an in-person meeting for reasons beyond their control, the delegation may request the postponement of a particular action for consideration at the next meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion substituted.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute, for meetings where the whole of a state delegation cannot attend in person a meeting for reasons beyond their control, the delegation may request to the Executive Director, Commission Chair, and Board Chair, for a postponement of a particular action for consideration at the next scheduled regular meeting or out of cycle meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion as Substituted

Move for meetings where the whole of a state delegation cannot attend in person a meeting for reasons beyond their control, the delegation may request to the executive director, commission chair, and board chair, for a postponement of a particular action for consideration at the next scheduled regular meeting or out of cycle meeting.

Motion passes by unanimous consent.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISFMP) POLICY BOARD (FEBRUARY 5, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive a report from the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee meeting summary earlier in this document); review results of the 2024 Commissioner Survey; discuss Board voting and virtual meeting standard operating procedures; receive an update on ongoing stock assessments; consider a letter request from the American Lobster Management Board; and receive an update on actions at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC).

Commissioners completed a survey of Commission performance in 2024, which measures Commissioners' opinions regarding the progress and actions of the Commission in 2024. Overall Commission performance has not varied much since 2021. The score for cooperation with federal partners decreased in 2024. This continues to be a major area of concern. The survey showed a decline in cooperation between Commissioners, with political issues being highlighted as the main cause. Efficiency and utilization of Commission resources, including human resources, have consistently been highly rated by Commissioners over the past 15 years. Engagement with state and federal legislative officials saw the largest score increase in 2024. Politics and prioritizing stakeholder interests and economics over stock needs was identified as the greatest obstacle to rebuilding stocks. Issues the Commission should focus on more include warming ocean conditions, incorporating socioeconomic information, and innovation to improve communication with the public.

Following up on the Executive Committee's earlier discussion on declared interests, voting privileges, and participation at virtual and hybrid meetings, the Policy Board discussed an Executive Committee motion to provide state delegations with the opportunity to request a postponement of a particular action for consideration at the next scheduled regular meeting or out of cycle meeting, in the event that all members of a state delegation cannot attend a meeting for reasons beyond their control. The Policy Board supported this motion, recognizing there are events outside Commissioners' control, such as natural disasters and extreme weather events, that preclude a state delegation from participating in important management actions (whether that be in-person or virtually). There continues to be support for the Commission maintaining the use of hybrid meetings, which have allowed for more participation by Commissioners and stakeholders. To facilitate hybrid discussions, staff will announce which Commissioners are attending virtually at the beginning of Board meetings. The Policy Board will continue to discuss issues related to state declared interests on species management boards and voting practices at future meetings.

Staff provided an update on stock assessments currently underway. For striped bass, a stock assessment update was tentatively scheduled for 2026. However, work has already begun on the benchmark stock assessment and the Atlantic Striped Bass TC recommended the assessment update be removed from the stock assessment schedule. The stock assessment update for weakfish is expected to be completed for Board consideration at the Spring Meeting. The Ecological Reference Points Work Group will meet for an assessment workshop in March, and an assessment update for tautog is scheduled for later this year.

At the recommendation of the American Lobster Management Board, the Policy Board agreed to send a letter to Maine and New Hampshire, with a copy sent to both State Governors, expressing disappointment with the decisions to renege on the adoption of gauge and vent size measures from Addendum XXVII. The letter will reiterate the importance of the measures for protecting the Gulf of Maine lobster stock and include recommendations to Maine and New Hampshire for working with the industry to develop proposals for alternative conservation strategies.

The Policy Board received an update about the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) upcoming February meeting where the Council will consider requesting the National Marine Fisheries Service publish control dates for the recreational for-hire fisheries for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. Publication of a control date would not have any immediate impact on fishery participants or fishing privileges, but the Council may use it as qualification criteria for development of future management measures impacting access to the fishery.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

On behalf of the Executive Committee, move for meetings where the whole of a state delegation cannot attend in person a meeting for reasons beyond their control, the delegation may request to the Executive Director, Commission Chair, and Board Chair, for a postponement of a particular action for consideration at the next scheduled regular meeting or out of cycle meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

On behalf of the American Lobster Management Board move the Commission task the staff to prepare and send a letter to Commissioners from ME and NH, with cc to both state governors, expressing extreme disappointment with the decisions to renege on the adoption of Addendum 27's minimum size increase, as originally proposed by the ME delegation and supported by the NH delegation.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

The Lobster Board suggests the letter should include the following points:

- **Acknowledge Maine officials' and industry's concern for uniform rules in the Gulf of Maine with abutting Canadian lobster fishing areas, which influenced their refusal to support the Addendum.**
- **Provide a history of the issue, justification for the proposal, charts of indices, declines in landings, years of deliberations, postponements, and delays on behalf of Maine and the industry. Note that the Maine delegation proposed the triggers to be proactive, risk-averse,**

and precautionary, aiming to minimize the long-term decline in the Gulf of Maine stock as occurred with the Southern New England lobster stock.

- Request Maine officials to begin scoping discussions with industry leaders, Maine's Marine Fisheries Advisory Council, Maine's Zone Councils, the Canadian government, and Canadian Lobster Fishing Area representatives to identify mutually agreeable conservation strategies and schedules for future Addenda.
- Ensure Maine entities develop consensus positions (to the degree possible) before the Board considers incorporating them in any future Addendum affecting the biological productivity of the Gulf of Maine lobster fishery.
- Request the Maine delegation to update the Commission at each quarterly meeting of its progress