

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting
August 6, 2024**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Call to Order, Chair Megan Ware 1

Approval of Agenda 1

Approval of Proceedings from May 1, 2024..... 1

Public Comment 1

Consider Approval of Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2023 Fishing Year 2

Consider Initial Recommendations 5

from Work Group on Recreational Release Mortality 5

Progress Update and Board Guidance on 2024 Stock Assessment Update 9

 Timeline and Progress Overview 9

 Provide Guidance to the Technical Committee for Management Options to Consider if the Assessment
 Indicates Reduction is Needed for Rebuilding..... 11

Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership..... 19

Update on 2024 Winter Striped Bass Tagging Cruise..... 19

Adjournment 21

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of May 1, 2024** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2023 Fishing Year and State Compliance Reports** (Page 5). Motion by Mike Luisi; second by Emerson Hasbrouck. Motion passes by consent (Page 5).
4. **Move to approve Tom Fote representing New Jersey and Will Poston representing the District of Columbia to the Striped Bass Advisory Panel** (Page 19). Motion by Dennis Abbott; second by Joe Cimino. Motion passes (Page 19).
5. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 20).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for P. Keliher (AA)	Joe Cimino, NY (AA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)
Rep. Allison Hepler, ME (LA)	Adam Nowalsky, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Cheri Patterson, NH (AA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Raymond Kane, MA (GA)	Robert Brown, MD, proxy for R. Dize (GA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA (LA)	David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	Pat Geer, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Jerry Mannen, NC (GA)
Justin Davis, CT (AA)	Chad Thomas, NC, proxy for Rep. Wray (LA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Ronald Owen, PRFC
Craig Miner, CT proxy for Rep. Gresko, CT (LA)	Daniel Ryan, DC, proxy for R. Cloyd
Marty Gary, NY (AA)	Rick Jacobson, US FWS
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Max Appelman, NOAA
Jim Gilmore, NY, proxy for Assbly. Thiele (LA)	

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

Ex-Officio Members

Tyler Grabowski, Technical Committee Chair	Sgt. Jeff Mercer, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.
Mike Celestino, Stk. Assmnt. Subcommittee Chair	

Staff

Bob Beal	Jeff Kipp	Kristen Anstead
Toni Kerns	Tracy Bauer	Jainita Patel
Tina Berger	James Boyle	Chelsea Tuohy
Madeline Musante	Emilie Franke	
Caitlin Starks	Katie Drew	

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, August 6, 2024, and was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Megan Ware.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MEGAN WARE: Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to call together the Striped Bass Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR WARE: We'll start with Approval of the Agenda. Are there any additions or modifications to the agenda? Seeing none; your agenda is approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR WARE: We'll move on to Approval of the proceedings from May, 2024. Are there any edits to the proceedings? Seeing none; the proceedings are approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR WARE: We'll now move into Public Comment. This is for items that are not on the agenda. We'll look for raised hands both in the room and on the webinar. We do have some folks interested in public comment, Des Kahn, I see your hand raised.

MR. DESMOND KAHN: I guess I've been called on then, is that correct?

CHAIR WARE: Yes, Des, we're ready to hear your comment. We have a three-minute timer for you.

MR. KAHN: Great, thank you. Well, I appreciate the chance to comment. I am speaking today about an issue that I don't believe the Board is fully aware of, but it has a major impact on coastwide abundance, and that is the Salem Nuclear Reactor on the Delaware River. This is

an old-style reactor with once through cooling, and it pulls in over three billion gallons of water a day from the Delaware River estuary.

It is one of the largest, if not the largest industrial water intake in the world, and it kills millions to billions of fish every year, including in many years they provide estimates of the numbers killed by life stage. In the case of striped bass, I remember their estimate for 2002 sticks in my mind, was 400 million larvae and early juvenile.

I have been working on this ever since 1999, when I worked for the state of Delaware. I was also a member of the Striped Bass Technical Committee for years, and was even Chair for a while. But this issue has not come up. I have estimated using equivalent recruit analysis, which is a standard method for gauging the impact of entrainment and impingement, that this plant kills about on average among years on average a third of all the Delaware River striped bass that are produced. Now, this is highly variable. Some years the estimates show the plant killed over 80 percent of all striped bass produced in the river, and we partly gauge this using the data from the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Delaware River haul seine survey for striped bass that they do every year. That is part of the analysis, and it allows us to estimate the total mortality rate.

I think when you look at the last estimate of the Delaware River stock it was estimated to contribute 15 to 20 percent to the coastwide stock, and at least a third of it is being killed by Salem. That means the stock is being reduced by 10 percent due to Salem. There are efforts underway to try to change this, and I would suggest that the Commission might want to look into this and possibly support those efforts. Thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you, Des, for your comment. Much appreciated. I think those were all the hands we had raised for public comment today.

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE
COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2023 FISHING YEAR**

CHAIR WARE: We'll move on to Agenda Item 4, which is Approval of our Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for 2023. I will pass it over to Emilie.

MS. EMILIE FRANKE: Great, thank you, Chair. I will go over the components of the FMP Review, hitting some highlights, as well as the Plan Review Team comments and recommendations. Then the Board action for consideration today is to consider approving the 2024 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports.

Starting with the status of the stock. We are still operating under the 2022 Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, which found the stock is overfished but not experiencing overfishing. As a reminder, this stock assessment incorporated data through 2021, and as we all know the next stock assessment, the 2024 Stock Assessment Update is currently in progress.

We will be getting those stock assessment results in just a few months. Moving on to status of the FMP. Last year, 2023, Amendment 7 was in place until the 2023 Emergency Action was implemented to reduce harvest of the 2015-year class. That action was approved on May 2nd of last year, and all states had to implement that action by July 2nd.

State implementation dates ranged from mid-May all the way until that July 2nd deadline. Then for this year in 2024 that Emergency Action was replaced by Addendum II, which was required to be implemented by May 1st. Here is the figure of total striped bass removals by sector in number of fish. You can see at the bottom commercial harvest and discards relatively stable, the quota managed fishery.

Then in the green is recreational harvest, and the purple is recreational release mortality. At the end of the time series, you can see that

spike in 2022, and then a decrease we saw last year in recreational removals. In 2023, total striped bass removals across both sectors were 5.6 million fish. This is about an 18 percent decrease from 2022 removals.

You can see on the screen here the proportion of removals by source of mortality. As in recent years, the commercial sector accounts for about 11 percent of the total mortality, and then the recreational sector accounts for about 89 percent of those fishery removals. As far as the commercial fishery, last year in 2023 harvest was estimated at about 4.2 million pounds. This is very similar to harvest in the previous year, 2022, only a 2 percent decrease by weight. Then as far as commercial quota utilization, in 2023 the ocean utilized about 74 percent of the quota. Again, that under-utilization of the ocean quota is due to the lack of availability of striped bass in North Carolina waters, as well as the four states that do not allow commercial fishing.

But all of the states that do allow commercial fishing, the ocean region used almost all of their quotas, between 94 to 98 percent of their quotas. The Chesapeake Bay used about 84 percent of their quota in 2023. Overall, neither the state quotas in the ocean nor the Chesapeake Bay quota was exceeded.

For the recreational fishery last year, harvest was estimated at 2.6 million fish. This is a 24 percent decrease from recreational harvest in 2022. About 26 million fish were released alive with our 9 percent release mortality rate. We assume that 2.3 million of those fish are assumed to have died, and that is about a 12 percent decrease in live releases from 2022.

When you look at these trends by region and by mode, you can sort of pick out a few things the PRT wanted to highlight. In 2023 we saw a larger decrease in harvest and directed trips in the ocean, as compared to the Chesapeake Bay. The PRT noted, you know this is likely, partly due at least to the Emergency Action, which had more of an impact

in the ocean than the Bay, with that 31-inch maximum size limit.

When you are looking at private and shore harvest, those modes decreased pretty similarly both in the ocean and the Chesapeake Bay. When you look at the for-hire modes there was a larger for-hire decrease in the ocean region, and actually a slight increase in for-hire harvest in the Chesapeake Bay.

In this year's FMP Review, the PRT included a breakdown of recreational harvest by Wave. The PRT anticipated there might be some questions or interest in considering the potential impact of the Emergency Action in 2023. The PRT, you know obviously caveat that not only is the harvest and catch impacted by the Emergency Action, but also by changes in fish availability, effort, et cetera.

But nonetheless, here are the Wave data. You can see for Wave 4 and Wave 5, in particular in the ocean, we saw pretty significant decreases in harvest in 2023, relative to 2022. For the Chesapeake Bay we saw a pretty big decrease in Wave 5. Again, the PRT notes that there are several factors that contribute to the level of harvest in both sectors.

Again, we have year class availability, those 2015s pretty available to the fishery in 2022 and '23. Then of course that Emergency Action in '23 to reduce harvest in angler behavior, overall stock abundance, whether the fish are available nearshore. You know all these factors contribute to the changes in harvest.

Another point from the FMP Review is the recruitment trigger. The Amendment 7 recruitment trigger is if any of the 4 juvenile abundance indices used in the assessment fall below 75 percent of the values from our high recruitment period for 3 years, then we have to use the low recruitment assumption when we're calculating our reference points. The recruitment trigger has been tripped; I think the past 2 years. It has been tripped again. We

reviewed the '21, '22 and 2023 JAI values, and we had 3 states that tripped the trigger. What that means is the 2024 stock assessment update will continue to use that low recruitment assumption. Again, we did use the low recruitment assumption in the 2022 assessment, so it will continue to be used in the 2024 assessment.

Here on the screen, I know it's pretty small, but are the 4 JAIs used in the stock assessment. In the top left corner, you have the New York Hudson River. The top right is the New Jersey Delaware River, you can see circled in red is what trips the trigger. Bottom left is the Maryland JAI. You can see 5 years of recruitment below the trigger level, and then the Virginia JAI on the bottom right also tripping the trigger this year.

As far as the PRT's comments, the PRT found that in 2023 all states implemented management consistent with the provisions of the FMP and with the Emergency Action, and there are no de minimis requests. The PRT had previously noted in last year's FMP review some difference in regulatory language for the Amendment 7 gear restrictions that were required to be implemented in 2023.

That is the prohibition on gaffing, and the need to release striped bass caught on any unapproved method of take without unnecessary injury. The PRT had noted a couple of differences last year. The Board did not express any concern last year, but I just wanted to point it out again. Then as far as PRT recommendations, the PRT just continues to emphasize the importance of commercial tag accounting, and the PRT recommends that we continue to follow up with states as needed.

Then the PRT also recommends the Board task the PRT with a review of the commercial tagging program, just to review the program components. This isn't necessarily intended to change the program requirements, but instead review how the programs have been operating, identify any issues that states have encountered, how they resolved them.

It would also be important to include the Law Enforcement Committee. Another thing the PRT just wants to make sure the reporting for the tagging programs is streamlined. Right now, there is some duplicative reporting in the tagging reports and the compliance reports. Then one additional comment.

The PRT continues to leave this in the FMP Review just to highlight it, that the New York spawning stock monitoring in the Hudson does not provide an index of abundance. This was identified as a high priority recommendation in the last benchmark, but I think it could be considered potentially in the next benchmark. That's it, I'm happy to take any questions.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you very much, Emilie. Just a programming note. I was told that Captain Newberry, you had raised your hand as we were transitioning to the FMP Review for public comment. If we have time at the end of our agenda today, I will look to you for your public comment. But for now, we're going to continue on with our agenda. We will see, are there any questions for Emilie on the FMP Review? Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. EMERSON C. HASBROUCK: Maybe I missed it in the presentation, but what was it that triggered the PRT to ask the Board to task them with review of commercial tagging program? Were there some issues with that? Then I have follow-up.

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Emerson, there weren't any specific issues, just that the PRT realized in the past few years that it's been over a decade since the commercial tagging program was implemented, and you know states have had various issues come up that they've been able to resolve with that sort of reviewing how the program has been going, and also sort of giving states the chance to collaborate could be beneficial.

MR. HASBROUCK: Then are you looking for two separate motions from the Board, one to task

the PRT and another to approve the review? Madam Chair, how do you want to proceed? I'm ready to make either or both motions.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Emerson, we don't need a motion for the tasking, so if that is the will of the Board, we can indicate that that is a task for the PRT and the Law Enforcement, or some members of the Law Enforcement Committee. I would just note, we have a really busy October ahead of us.,

I wanted expectations of timing, because there are some things we will try to address ahead of the annual meeting. If anyone has concerns about tasking the PRT with the tagging program, I think now would be an opportunity to speak up. But Nichola, I had seen your hand. You can comment on something else.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: I was just going to lend my support for the PRT to undertake that as time permits, recognizing the staffing and state resources to do that are less of a priority than the assessment and any lead-up management action to it.

CHAIR WARE: Great, thanks, Nichola. Any other questions? Yes, Mike.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: I was curious, I think the last slide that was presented referenced the fact that New York, or the work they do in New York is not a relative abundance index. What would be required? I mean what would have to happen for them, for the state of New York to have an index that would be identified as an abundance index or relative abundance index?

DR. KATIE DREW: I think the issue with the New York work is that it is a tagging program, so it is focused on tagging those spawning fish, and as a result there is not really a systematic design, so it is basically, you go out and you try to find the fish to tag them, and so you can't really use it as index of abundance.

I think there is potentially some statistical work that the TC could maybe look into, to see if we could standardize it a little from that side, but I think the

flip side would also then be working with New York to actually transition that, if they were so inclined, to a formal statistical design survey, and not through the more opportunistic tagging approach that it is right now.

CHAIR WARE: Marty, would you like to comment on that?

MR. MARTIN GARY: Yes, thanks, Madam Chair. I think to that point, where Katie mentioned New York's intent is to work with academic partners, to use that data from our tagging for the spawning stock to develop that index of relative abundance, you know for the spawning stock in the Hudson River. That is our intent, and we would hope to have that ready for the 2027 Benchmark.

CHAIR WARE: Not seeing any other hands, we would be looking for a motion to approve the FMP Review and State Compliance Reports. Mike Luisi, do you want to read that motion in, please?

MR. LUISI: Sure, **move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2023 Fishing Year and State Compliance Reports.**

CHAIR WARE: Great, motion by Mike Luisi, we have a second from Emerson Hasbrouck online. **Is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none; the motion is approved by unanimous consent.**

CONSIDER INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WORK GROUP ON RECREATIONAL RELEASE MORTALITY

CHAIR WARE: We'll move on to Agenda Item Number 5, which is Considering Initial Recommendations from our Work Group on the Recreational Release Mortality.

I want to just give a shout out to Chris Batsavage, Nichola Meserve, Marty Gary, Adam Nowalsky, Mike Luisi, Dave Sikorsky and Max Appelman. It's been a really great Work Group so far. I appreciate the time you guys have

taken to work through a pretty difficult topic. We're going to look to Chris Batsavage, who has been chairing that Work Group for an update.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Yes, let's go ahead right into the presentation. Just a quick background. This Work Group was formed by the Board at their last meeting to discuss recreational release mortality issues, and there are four tasks that the Work Group was given to look at. Just quickly go through them again is to review the existing non-targeting closures, including effort and enforceability, review the Massachusetts DMF study and other hook and line studies, to evaluate gear restrictions.

Identify stock assessment work to inform our discussion on recreational release mortality, and to consider public scoping on measures to address release mortality. As Megan mentioned, here is the roster of Work Group members, so I just won't repeat them again. Just a kind of timeline of where we are now versus a couple months ago and where we're going.

I already mentioned that this all started back in May. The Work Group held meetings in June and July, to primarily discuss the stock assessment and public scoping task that is Number 3 and 4. Of course today, we're providing our initial recommendations to the Board on the stock assessment and public scoping tasks, and also for full consideration of the Work Group's recommendations.

Looking ahead for late summer into October, we'll have a couple more Work Group meetings to discuss the non-targeting closures and gear restrictions, and revisit Task 3 and 4 as needed, and then we'll wrap things up with a final report that will be presented to the Board at their meeting in October. I'll cover the discussions the Work Group had on the stock assessment work, so Task 3. This task was to identify stock assessment sensitivity runs on how low release mortality must get to see a reduction in total removals. This task considered the tradeoff between reducing the recreational mortality rate and reducing overall number of

recreational releases. The Work Group reviewed the past Technical Committee work that explored how different release mortality rates throughout the time series would impact the stock assessment results.

This task is to understand how reducing recreational release mortality in the future will impact the stock. After that discussion the Work Group recommends the following items for the TC to analyze. The first one is, if a reduction is needed to keep rebuilding, determine how low the release mortality rate would need to be, to achieve that entire reduction through the release mortality rate alone.

If the number of live releases is constant, what would the release mortality rate need to be to achieve reduction? The second task is, if a reduction is needed to achieve rebuilding, determine the percent reduction of live releases needed to achieve the entire reduction through live releases alone. Using the current 9 percent release mortality rate, how many fewer live releases would there need to be to achieve the reduction?

These tasks are looking at the extreme cases for reducing recreational release mortality, with the first one looking at the release mortality rate, and the second one looking at the number of released fish. Both of these assume constant recreational harvest, but each of these has different iterations for the commercial fishery.

One has the constant commercial harvest, and the other is for an equal reduction of commercial harvest. The third item we're asking the TC to look at is, if a reduction is needed to achieve rebuilding, determine the percent reduction and number of live releases needed under the current 9 percent mortality rate, assuming there is an associated reduction in recreational harvest due to no-targeting closures.

This assumes a no-targeting closure will release harvest and live releases. The TC will need to determine how best to quantify release reductions during no-targeting closures. The Work Group recommends TC input on the timing of the no-targeting closures, and like the other tasks this one will also have two iterations for the commercial fishery, one with a constant harvest, another with an equal reduction in commercial harvest.

The fourth item that we're asking for the TC to look at is to identify the tradeoffs of implementing no-targeting closures at different times of the year, with different assumed release mortality rates to help inform when and where implementing no-targeting closures would result in highest reduction.

Factors could include water temperature and salinity, which with the assumption that the release mortality rate is higher when the water temperature is high, and the salinity is low. The Work Group understands that reductions from no-targeting closures depend on where and when they occur, so TC guidance would be very helpful for this task.

Just to sum things up for Task 3, the Work Group recommends tasking the TC as described, to address these things during the ongoing 2024 stock assessment. Next, I will cover the Work Group's discussions on public scoping. Just a reminder, this task is for if the Board considers taking action by a Board vote instead of an addendum, if the upcoming stock assessment indicates additional reductions are needed for stock rebuilding. The Work Group supports an online survey approach to get public input on the different issues regarding recreational release mortality, but we're concerned that conducting the survey prior to October isn't going to give us enough time to have a well-developed survey to roll out to the public.

This is a very important opportunity to inform management beyond just the next stock assessment, so we want to take a little more time on this, and with that the additional time for the survey development would be beneficial for us, and also the fact that as was mentioned a few times,

none of the Work Group members are trained in survey design.

We at least want to be careful in how we craft these questions. With that, if we could, we would like to consult with the Commission's Committee on Economic and Social Sciences, their membership, maybe look at potential external survey experts, and also look for industry input on the Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

Based on these concerns and any considerations, the Work Group recommends the Board extend the timeline for the public survey on release mortality. The survey could be conducted soon after the annual meeting, which could inform Board action later in 2024. Before you do this, it would require a special meeting for the Board, or a survey can be conducted in 2025.

The Board could still take action without the survey results if the upcoming stock assessment indicates a reduction is needed. I won't do a full stop on what we were thinking about possibly doing after we get the assessment. The Work Group thinks it is important for input from survey experts and the Advisory Panel before releasing the survey out to the public.

The Work Group also identified need for an outreach strategy for disseminating the survey, to make sure we canvas and get as much input from the public as possible. That summarizes the last two Work Group meetings. Again, I want to thank special thanks to Emilie and the Work Group. I think it's been very productive meetings we've had, and also thanks to the public participating. We provide some opportunity for the public comment, and they had some very helpful comments to kind of guide us along the way.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you very much, Chris, and thank you for chairing the Work Group. We're going to start with any questions for the Work Group. We'll talk about their recommendations

on the stock assessment sensitivity runs and public scoping next, but we'll just start with questions. Okay, no questions. We'll go to their recommendations. We'll start with the stock assessment sensitivity runs.

We have four sensitivity runs that the Work Group is recommending, so this would be an opportunity if folks have modifications or additions, deletions to that list to let us know. If not, then we will work to task the TC and SAS. Okay, great. We were going to collectively task the TC and SAS with those four sensitivity-runs, and we look forward to seeing that at the October meeting. We'll move on to the public scoping and the development of a survey. We have a Work Group recommendation to take a little more time to develop that survey. I think it would be helpful if folks around the table have thoughts on whether that survey should be ready to go by the October board meeting. If some time in 2025 is okay that might help prioritize the workload of staff and the Work Group members as we move forward. Are there any thoughts on the timing of the survey or if folks are still interested in a survey that would be helpful to hear as well. Yes, Jay.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: I agree with what was in the report, I think. The benefit of having that would have been to get some, like we have some standard things we think about with respect to what we can do to decrease release mortality. But it would have been good to get, I don't know, like larger scope on that, like get some ideas maybe we haven't heard yet.

That is an attribute of the survey, however, I agree to create a survey to actually get like actionable good pieces of information from it takes time and thought. I'm in agreement, you know and working on that a little longer and delaying the survey. Nice job on all this. It was a really thoughtful document. I appreciated it.

CHAIR WARE: I have Jim Gilmore and then Bill Hyatt.

MR. JAMES J. GILMORE: Just in terms of practicality, and I agree 100 percent on the survey. It should be

delayed a bit from experience from last year, when we ran a survey and the original parameters for it were delayed, and we ran the survey very late, very short period of time. It was reported in the newspaper that 56 percent are opposed to this change, whatever, but then the reality was they didn't report we only reached 2 percent of the fishing community. It was a useless survey, but the danger of misusing numbers like that becomes an important issue. Do it right, so delay it a little bit and I think it will be more useful.

CHAIR WARE: Bill Hyatt.

MR. WILLIAM HYATT: Yes, I also support the additional time, particularly for getting some expert consultation on the construction of the survey. The idea that it's going to be online adds additional bias. They might think any type of consultation you get on the wording and the format, to make sure an online survey is as accurate as possible is for long term benefit.

CHAIR WARE: Great, so what I am hearing so far for feedback is continued interest in the survey, wanting to make sure we're developing it correctly. I would say encouraging the Work Group to consult with the staff as they can, and continuing on, and we'll see where we get by October. I'll look to Work Group members and make sure folks feel like that is enough feedback for you guys. Yes, okay, great.

MR. ERIC REID: Sorry, Madam Chair, I'm late to the game. I did hear a comment about socioeconomics. One reason to delay is to make sure we get good socioeconomic response, based on how the survey is conducted. I guess I want to make sure socioeconomics are included in the survey. I think that's an easier way to say it.

MS. FRANKE: Just from a sort of staff perspective, could you expand on that a little bit? I mean I think in terms of the survey distribution, you know if the Board is looking to reach as many people as possible, of course the

Commission will push the survey through our channels, but I think we would look to the Board members to make sure that the stakeholders in their states are receiving the survey. But if you are interested in specific type of questions on the survey related to socioeconomics that would be great.

MR. REID: No, I'm not going to even dare to recommend any specific questions. I just want to make sure we reach out to a wide variety of stakeholders. I think a wider variety versus a lot of surveys in general is more important. How do you pinpoint your target audience, and make sure you get all the different user groups in the response? It is important.

CHAIR WARE: David Borden.

MR. DAVID V. BORDEN: I just wanted to follow up on Eric's point about economics and soliciting a broad group. If we are going to consider gear changes at some point, which we might want to. Some constituents are already advocating that. Then I think it's important to get the direct input from the gear manufacturers, particularly on the issue of lead time to change lures and those types of consideration. Whether that is done as part of the committee or an individual on the committee then goes and talks to them directly. But I think their input is important at this stage.

CHAIR WARE: Any other comments on the survey? Yes, John Clark and then Ray Kane.

MR. JOHN CLARK: I'm just trying to be clear on the timeline of these various tasks going on. In other words, we would be looking at the first and second, which would be kind of estimating how much of a reduction in recreational mortality we would have to see. Then we would be coming up with ideas as how we could reduce it, and then the survey would take a while to develop. When the survey is actually out, is it going to have specific ideas in the survey, or is it going to be the whole kind of long list of possible methods that can be used to reduce recreational mortality?

MS. FRANKE: I can start the answer, and Work Group members feel free to jump in. But I think because the survey is not directly tied to a management document with management options, it will be a little bit more general, trying to encompass, you know recreational release mortality as a whole, including a list of potential ways to address it. I think also asking for feedback from the public on ways to address it. It won't be Option A, Option B, Option C, it will be marginal.

CHAIR WARE: Ray Kane.

MR. RAYMOND W. KANE: Madam Chair, this has to do with Emilie's presentation. I don't want to take you off track. If I could get this question now. On tasking the TC under Number 2, it closed out the Working Group recommends 2 iterations for each scenario, one with constant commercial harvest and one with an equal reduction of commercial harvest. What are the thoughts about that? I mean we just, commercial fishermen just took a cut of 7 percent. Can you give me some background why you would be tasking the TC with this once again?

MS. FRANKE: Right, so that detail is just sort of how to parameterize the projections the TC would be running for these four tasks. For these four tasks, like there are four sources of removals; release mortality, recreational harvest, and then commercial harvest and discards. The focus of these tasks and resulting TC projections would be figuring out what that reduction in release mortality would look like.

Then the question is, how do we parameterize the other variables in those projections? We would assume recreational harvest is constant, because we are trying to focus on that recreational release mortality, and then the point about 2 iterations for the commercial fishery, one assuming constant commercial harvest, and the other assuming equal reduction in commercial.

It's just getting to the fact that the Board has had discussions before about how to split reductions, which we'll get to in the next agenda item as well. But I think that just covered all of the bases, so it would provide sort of a range of results, as far as those scenarios. It's not a specific management option, it's just different ways to parameterize those reductions.

CHAIR WARE: Last call on any comments on the survey, otherwise we'll have the Work Group continue working. You've gotten some feedback on things to consider. I've also heard feedback just on a Work Group call that I do think we want to keep this manageable for the public. I just want to set expectations on all the topics that we can cover in a survey and still be effective.

I am hearing we have a member of the public that wants to comment. We're going to keep trucking along here on our agenda, but if we do have time at the end I will go to a member of the public.

PROGRESS UPDATE AND BOARD GUIDANCE ON 2024 STOCK ASSESSMENT UPDATE

CHAIR WARE: Next, we have Agenda Item Number 6, an Update on the 2024 Stock Assessment and Board Guidance. I'll turn it over to Katie Drew.

TIMELINE AND PROGRESS OVERVIEW

DR. DREW: I will be presenting on essentially a quick update on where we are with the assessment, and then turn to you guys for a request for guidance on some of the things that we're working on with this assessment. In terms of the assessment update timeline, all of the data have been submitted, which is great.

We are in the period now doing some initial model runs, with input from the staff as needed. September 4 to 5 we will be having an in-person TC and staff meeting to discuss the final model runs, and discuss potential management measures if a reduction is needed to achieve rebuilding. After that meeting, we will finalize the report and have it ready for the Board during the week of October 21, during annual meeting.

As you perhaps recall, Addendum II specified that if an upcoming stock assessment prior to the rebuilding deadline of 2029 indicates that the stock is not projected to rebuild by 2029, with a probability greater than or equal to 50 percent, the Board can respond via Board action, essentially by changing management measures via a vote to pass a motion, as opposed to an addendum or an amendment.

This is different from the Emergency Action process, but this was specifically written into Addendum II to allow the Board to respond more quickly to a finding that the rebuilding had been delayed and additional action needed to be taken. Essentially, what will happen is that in 2024 the assessment update will be presented at annual meeting in October. At this point we will tell you stock status, so whether we are overfishing and whether or not we are overfished, and then we will also report on the set of projections that we have done to determine what level of harvest and what level of removals is necessary to ensure that we will be rebuilt by 2029.

If the projections indicate there is a less than 50 percent probability of rebuilding by 2029 under the current F rate and the current regulations, the TC would then calculate new management options to present concurrently with the assessment. We would say, here is the percent reduction that we need, in order to rebuild by 2029.

Here are the options that will achieve that, so that the Board can consider this altogether and make a decision in October, as opposed to traditionally we will generally present you with stock status and the percent removals, and then we would be tasked with developing options, and that you would review at the next meeting, and then et cetera.

In this case the TC will come up with some options to present with the assessment if a reduction is necessary. If a reduction is needed, the TC could consider quota reductions for the commercial sector, and changes to the size, bag

and season for the recreational sector. However, keep in mind the range of viable recreational options may be limited.

There is not a lot we can do that we have not already done on that front. Keeping that in mind, to ensure that the TC develops viable options for the Board, we are looking for guidance on the following questions. Number one, how should any potential reductions be allocated across sectors? Number two, what types of recreational options should be considered?

In terms of how should potential reduction be allocated across sectors, I think some of the things we're looking for are things like should all sectors take an equal percent reduction, or just one sector takes more or less of a reduction? If you want unequal reduction, how do you want that split out? That kind of guidance you would like right now, because that will allow us to provide more concrete, more viable options for you.

Then, if the recreational sector can't achieve the required reduction exactly, so for example, if we need a X percent reduction but we can only get a Y percent or a Z percent, you're a little above or you're a little below. How should that difference be handled? For example, would you allow the recreational sectors to sort of undershoot that reduction and have the rest of it made up by the commercial sector?

Would you prefer that the recreational sector overshoots their reduction, that is take a higher reduction, and then have the commercial sector take the same flat required reduction, or sort of the commercial sector then gets the leftover reductions and take a lower reduction if the rec side overshoots their percent reduction?

This would be more on how are we allocating the reduction across the sectors, and then Question 2, what types of recreational options should be considered? Are there specific things that you want to see the numbers run for? Some things would be are you more interested in; I think seasons? Obviously, that may be one of our few options left that has some flexibility. Is the Board more interested in a no-targeting or a no harvest type of

closure? Then secondarily, is the Board interested in maybe a moving or a non-fixed slot limit or a size limit to protect a 2018-year class for more years? Just the 2018-year class, it was not as strong as the 2015, but it was above average, one of the few above average ones we've had in a while. In 2025, when these measures will take place, they will be in the same position that the 2015s were in 2023, so they will be 8 years old and entering that ocean slot.

If we move the slot up to protect 2025, it's going to move into it in 2026. Is the Board interested in some kind of measure that would change over time to protect the 2018-year class for more years? Generally, when the TC has presented options, the Board has put a lot of emphasis on management stability, and so we have presented sort of one option that does not change into the future.

If the Board is interested in revisiting that emphasis on management stability, and would be more interested in pursuing maybe something closer to what was done during the original rebuilding plan for striped bass, where that size limit or that slot moved to protect a strong year class. Now would be a good time for the Board to request us to look into that, and we could consider that going forward.

Those are the two specific aspects that we would like guidance on, and additionally for additional recreational options, if there is something specific the Board wants, make sure that we look at, now would be a great time for you to tell us. I would be happy to take any questions, and of course happy to take any guidance from the Board.

CHAIR WARE: I know those are some challenging questions, particularly in the absence of knowing what the assessment says. I also suspect there are some varying opinions around the table as to how to answer those. I think we're going to just open it up and see what Board member's thoughts are. I'm not planning to take any motions, and we'll see how

the discussion goes. Robert Brown, did you have your hand up?

PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE FOR MANAGEMENT OPTIONS TO CONSIDER IF THE ASSESSMENT INDICATES REDUCTION IS NEEDED FOR REBUILDING

MR. ROBERET T. BROWN: Yes. The commercial industry heard talk about possibly another reduction if it was necessary. We just took a 7 percent reduction, and on top of that 7 percent reduction it wasn't given to us in time, and our quotas were already given to us in our tags for the year. Now we may possibly be facing as much as an extra 7 percent if we happen to go over that 7 percent.

I don't think it's justified at this time for the TC to even consider the commercial fishery a reduction of any kind at this time. The last reduction that the recreational had they took a slot limit. A slot limit doesn't work, because number one, it causes more dead discards, and it also, they really didn't take a cut. They can go out every day that the season is open and catch one fish per person per day, and that has to be addressed.

CHAIR WARE: Next I have Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: I guess to be consistent with what I've said in the past, it's kind of hard to think about reductions in general. I'm more in favor of equal reductions for the commercial and recreational sectors, or at least close to equal, to account for potential recoupment. We know that the recreational catch is overall higher than the commercial, but that is with the percent of commercial recreational in a given area varies by state and by region. I think that's important, and also how we've done reductions for the commercial fishery in the past, it's a reduction in quota not in landings, so it's a little different than what we did while we were hoping to reduce harvest or catch for the recreational fishery. In terms of things to look at, yes, I mean I think harvest season closures is kind of one of the last remaining things we have available to us.

I think that should be explored, understanding that there still could be some catch and release fishing going on, which will result in mortality, but I think we've seen at least in North Carolina, we've seen when we've had closed seasons or closed days for the recreational fishery, that there is less overall effort during those times where that is the case. In the rest of the coast, I don't know.

Then I guess there is a consideration for the TC if there is like an X percent reduction needed. Instead of trying to hit that number on the mark exactly, we know there is a lot of inherent uncertainty in recoupage and things like that. If the TC would, if they think it's prudent to recommend aiming a little higher than that to ensure that we actually get the reduction we hope, because we are running out of time with 2029 rebuilding not too far away from now. If we continue to fall short, we may not get to where we need to be by the stock rebuilding schedule.

CHAIR WARE: Next we have Marty Gary.

MR. GARY: Question for Katie and a possible follow up or comment for her. Katie, could you characterize for us at the Board how the assessment model will be presented to us? I guess I'll put it in this context. I'm getting personally a lot of questions about if and how the chasm of 6 weak year classes in Chesapeake Bay will be captured in this next upcoming assessment, or if it will be captured in the upcoming assessment.

If those year classes are projected into the model, how far out do you take it? I guess we have a sense that we know, as you just sort of said, we have several year classes, '11, '14, '15, '17, '18 that are probably lifting our biomass toward that target rebuild in 2029, but then we have this dearth of year classes, weak year classes coming in afterwards.

I guess really the question is, does the model, output you are going to present to us in October going to capture part of that, all of it? I guess if it isn't, I'm curious if we have options,

the Board has options to ask the TC to see if we could capture some of that to better inform us.

DR. DREW: Sure, so we will have new information on recruitment. We will be able to include the 2022 indices for a 2023 terminal year. We start our model with Age 1, so we're sort of always a year behind on the recruitment. We will be able to use the 2023 value in the projections going forward. That period of weak recruitment will be encompassed, or it will be folded into the projections through, I think right now we are very focused on 2029 as the rebuilding year.

I think we will see that those strong year classes of 2015, 2018, 2014 and '17 to a lesser extent, are supporting that rebuilding, but they will be replaced by even weaker year classes. That will sort of show the trajectory that if those year classes were average, we would probably be rebuilding faster. But then when we get to 2029, that is when they are going to be starting to fully mature. The 2021-year class will be Age 9, 8 or 9 will be fully mature at that point in 2029, and what is coming behind them to continue to support that SSB is going to be those weaker year classes. I think we will be able to rebuild or we will be able to develop calculations to rebuild to 2029, and then a question of what happens after we rebuild is probably one that the Board should start thinking about. I think we are thinking of 2029 as sort of the end goal, and it's an important goal, it's mandated by the FMP.

But biologically what is going to happen after 2029 is there is not going to be a sudden miraculous, even if there were a sudden miraculous flip the switch and recruitment went back to the long-term average or the boom years. It is still going to take years for those strong year classes to propagate through the population.

What happens after rebuilding, after we get to that benchmark is definitely something the Board should maybe start thinking about. If the Board would like to start thinking about it during this assessment, we could extend our projection timeline a few years, so if we hit 2029, great. What's going to happen after that?

Are we going to be able to continue at that level or are we going to decline below the target again as the poor year classes come through and the stronger year classes die off? I think that is not clear, you know what that would look like from a fishing mortality or fishery perspective, but for sure, what we have sort of in the bank is not promising for being able to fish at the levels that we fished at during Amendment 6.

If the Board would like to task the TC with maybe looking out beyond the rebuilding horizon, we could, obviously recognizing that that gets more uncertain as you go forward. But if the Board would like to start thinking about that now, I think we could. If the Board would like to make that a bigger focus of the next benchmark assessment, which we will have to start working on, basically as soon as this assessment update is done, that could also be a directive from the Board.

CHAIR WARE: Follow up, Marty.

MR. GARY: Just very quickly. Thank you, Katie, that helped a lot. I don't know how the Board guidance would be, but I think my concern is in October the public sees that rising spawning stock biomass based on the way you characterized it, but doesn't see the longer-range picture.

I guess my personal feeling is that I know the confidence intervals start getting a little bit less favorable for penny and dam specifics, but I would like to see, I guess another couple of years built into those projections. I'm not sure how the other Board members feel, but I don't know if you need formal guidance on that in front of a motion or something. But I would like to see how other Board members feel about that as well.

CHAIR WARE: Next I have John Clark.

MR. CLARK: I agree with Chris and Marty about looking at all the recreational options. I would just like to add and disagree with Chris. I would like to see, in terms of the sector breakdown to

do it proportionally also, to look at reduction where each sector would be taking a reduction based on the proportion of removals, they are responsible for in the stock. As long as we are looking at the rebuilding, I would also once again be curious as to just where the rebuilding would look if the target was closer to the threshold as the reference point. As I've stated before, I just think the target is extremely high, very difficult to reach, and I don't know if that's a possibility, but I know that based on the Amendment we're kind of stuck with these reference points. But I just think they are setting us up for continual crisis here.

DR. DREW: I think we can, obviously we're not changing reference points at this point, but when we do the projections, we always show the probability of being above the threshold, as well as the probability of being above the target. We can continue to show that as well. Then I think as for your proportional reduction question.

Just to be clear, I think it would be something along the lines of what we talked about during one of our last actions, where for example, if you need an 18 percent reduction that the commercial sector makes up 10 percent of the overall catch, the commercial sector would take a 1.8 percent reduction, and the rest of the reduction would come from the recreational. Okay.

CHAIR WARE: Next I have Jason McNamee.

DR. McNAMEE: Thanks, Katie for the presentation, and kind of seeding the thoughts there. I always appreciate that. I have a couple of things for you. Just a confirmation, maybe. I like the idea that you offered about trying to move that slot limit a little bit and seeing the effects. I don't know if there is some way to kind of optimize that kind of find a slot limit that optimizes reductions or rebuilding.

Maybe both of those could be looked at if they are not the same. It's something that we had talked about, you know when we developed a slot limit, this notion that slot limits perform best when they are dynamic, in particular when we're trying to protect very specific year classes. By its nature then you'll have to move to do that as the fish grow.

That was one idea. Another one, which I'm guessing might spark a little more conversation around the table, is investigating some split mode options. Peeling off the party and charter sector separately and dealing with them. I'm not saying not to have them take reductions as well, but to kind of treat them separately, so that whatever reductions would need to take place could be different than the overall recreational fishery. I was wondering, you guys have a lot to do and we just gave you a bunch more, but here is another.

I know it's an update and what I'm about to suggest can't be done for determining stock status and things like that. I recognize that. But I wonder if you could actually treat party/charter as a separate fleet in the model, because I think when we talk about these things we are sort of talking about the management aspect. But I don't think we've had a lot of information or any information on the effects to the population by doing this change. That could help that.

I'm fine if the answer is no, we don't have time to do that. But maybe that could be like a longer-term task as well, to kind of split out party and charter. I think the information should be there, right? We have information to inform selectivities and things like that, because most of the sampling information is from the party and charter sector anyways, and then MRIP has separate removals. I think it can be done, but maybe I'm wrong. But it's just a thought. Then one more to the discussion you just had a moment ago, I think it was with Marty. But longer term, so I'm not talking about now. But kind of future thinking, maybe during the benchmark process. I do think it makes a lot of sense to start looking at some sustainable management options under a low recruitment future.

I think we all kind of think of these things as all right, we've just got to get the population back, then we can get back to the good old days, and maybe the good old days are not going to be here maybe for a while, so it might be smart if

our slot limits in the future here, do we need to get comfortable with them, and then what does that look like? Things like that. Yes, thanks, happy to take any feedback as well. But thanks for the time.

DR. DREW: I think in terms of the pulling the party/charter fleet out as a separate fleet within the model. We can't do that, well we could, but I think that would be such a significant change that it would warrant a benchmark. Right now, we do not have the sectors as specific fleets, we have a Bay fleet and an ocean fleet.

We would need to do basically a Bay charter and an ocean charter fleet. I think it would be a pretty significant change to model structure, as well as the data input that we could accomplish in an update. But we could look at the mode split option as one of the options that we do for if a reduction is needed, what would a different reg for the for-hire fleet look like.

DR. McNAMEE: Just a quick follow up, Madam Chair. Thank you for that, I appreciate the comment. It just sparked another thought. Thinking ahead to the benchmark, yes. A reconstruction of the fleet structure might make a lot of sense this go around, and particularly some of the discussions we have about the commercial sector.

Now I think the way the model works is the selectivity. It's because of the predominantly recreational fishery that it is mostly like a rod and reel type selectivity. But I think there is enough difference now, in particular with the slot limit that peeling out the commercial as a fleet as well, and doing like logistic selectivity or something like that maybe makes sense. I don't know that it will do anything, but just kind of future through idea.

CHAIR WARE: Justin Davis.

DR. JUSTIN DAVIS: If you'll allow me, I've got a question and then some follow up comments. The question is for Dr. Drew and it relates to the current slot limit. Will the current 28–31-inch slot limit in the ocean fishery be protective of the 2018-year class for like at least next year, probably, and then

maybe even the year after, based on the size of the fish in that year class?

DR. DREW: We have some slides on this. This is basically the size distribution of the 2018-year class in 2025, 2026, and 2027 with the current slot limit on it now. Similar to this, this is basically just a length distribution, it's not about abundance, but it's about how that population is distributed over those length bins.

What you can see is that in 2025 it is basically moving into, like 2024 it's starting to move in there right now, 2025 it's going to basically be hitting the peak of them, and then slowly start moving out. This is kind of where if we were to adjust the slot limit in the hopes of taking a reduction, you know one option on the table would be to move that up for 2025. But obviously as you can see, as you move that up, they are just going to move into it. I don't know if we would want to move it down, but from like as you said, a biological reproductive standpoint.

But maybe the option is instead, have a higher limit that continues to move with them, as opposed to a single constant option. But basically, this is right now on the status quo regulations this is how that plus that 2018-year class will move through the slot for the next few years.

DR. DAVIS: Okay, thanks, that is helpful. Some general comments on the various questions that were posed about what we should look at. The topic of how to allocate the reduction across sectors, I mean that has been a topic of debate in the last three management actions we've done, and there is no way we are going to any kind of agreement today around the table about that.

I don't think we should really have the debate today. I think the best thing to do would be for whatever options the TC develops for us to consider in October, that we kind of have two sets, one if the commercial sector takes no reduction and one if the commercial sector takes an equal percent reduction to the

recreational sector, because that at least sort of puts guardrails on it.

Then we can potentially pick something in the middle. I think harvest closures are the obvious option here, and I remember in Amendment VII, I think it was, we kind of had a suite of harvest closure options that we ultimately voted to take out of the document. I think that is what we need to return to and look to as potential options to adopt in October.

I do remember that there was a lot of options in there, in terms of regional splits, and then also where to place those closures. I think there is a lot of potential variation in there. Then especially if you're going to develop two sets, one for no commercial reduction, one for equal percent commercial reduction. That seems like a lot of work.

I don't know, it might be possible between now and October to put that information back in front of the Board, even by e-mail, and try to gather some input on what sort of regional splits people would be willing to consider. I remember that was a really tricky issue with those closures, maybe that is possible.

No -targeting closures, from my standpoint I still feel like those are an option of last resort. I would not be comfortable with adopting any sort of coastwide no-targeting closure option in October by Board action, without going through our normal addendum process, particularly because we're not going to have the benefit of any public scoping or public survey on that question ahead of that action.

That is just where I am on the no-targeting closure issue. The last thing I'll say is I'm totally in agreement with the idea of extending out the stock assessment projection timelines, maybe to 2034, to better show that impact of that big gap in the stock that is coming with that recruitment failure.

DR. DREW: This is related to the point about the region to emphasize. Under our current Amendment 7, conservation equivalency is not allowed for these recreational options. What we pick in October is what everybody is, there are a

few limited exceptions in the Delaware Bay and the Hudson River, and in Pennsylvania, for a very limited. But otherwise, what you pick for the Bay and what you pick for the ocean is what everybody is going to be stuck with for the future.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Katie. I have Doug Grout, then Nichola Meserve, Mike Luisi and then Emerson Hasbrouck, and then at the end of that list I think we're going to assess time and see where we're at. Next, I have Doug Grout.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: I would like to agree with Jason McNamee that to look at some kind of method of optimizing the slot limit, whether it's a 3- or 5-inch slot limit, how can we optimize the reduction we would get from a slot limit. I'm certainly in favor of all sectors taking some kind of a reduction, not necessarily equal, but some kind of a reduction, if we do have to take it.

The other concept I am going to throw out here, and I'm not sure how the Technical Committee could address this. There are many states that have five-wave fisheries, some even longer. There are other states, particularly the states of Maine and New Hampshire that have less than, about a two-wave fishery, essentially four months of fishing.

Taking reductions from a seasonal closure, if we're looking from seasonal closures, is a very difficult thing to get down to, depending on what kind of percentages we're going to have to get. To be honest with you, when you look at New Hampshire and Maine's fisheries, and how much they are contributing to the overall harvest, harvest and catch-and-release fishery, they are very, very small compared to a lot of the major producer states.

If there is some way that we can have some flexibility in seasonal closures when you have such a short season already, I would appreciate if the Board could take that or the Technical Committee could come up with something that would take that into consideration. Am I being

clear about what I'm looking for here? Do you understand?

DR. DREW: I guess are you thinking of something along the lines of the regional approach that was proposed last time, where it's like states in these regions will close during these specific weeks to actually, you know if you were closed during March that affects you not at all, versus you know when would you get the best reduction for an effective reduction according to the height of the fishery in different regions.

I think that is possible, that is we could tailor when and how long those reductions are in each region, in order to get sort of the effective reduction that we're looking for, or are you talking about different reductions in different states, based on the timing of your fisheries?

MR. GROUT: What you had come up with before, for the previous regional reductions. The only ones that looked reasonable to me were the Maine and New Hampshire one. But even within that, because again, we have such a short season that fish are actually available to us. That getting down to, you might have to take a week reduction some place, and that is really, excuse my language, kind of a crap shoot when you pick it. The other aspect I'm looking at is, can different regions that have lower contributions to the overall mortality rate have less seasonal reductions, proportional reductions that they would have to take. Those are my two concepts that I'm hoping might be able to get in there. But that might make things too complicated.

DR. DREW: I mean it would definitely be complicated, but I think there is a larger, it sounds like basically you are asking for your state to take a smaller reduction than other states, like in terms of, so it's a required reduction of 18 percent then you guys would ask to take a smaller reduction than that, because it would require closing your season too long if you were to achieve an 18 percent reduction.

That is more of, that is like now we're getting to state-by-state allocation. I think the TC could do it if you were interested in it, but I feel like we would need to see specifically have to look at that, and

probably giving some guidance on what constitutes, how much less of a reduction do you get to take, versus other states?

CHAIR WARE: Next I have Nichola Meserve.

MS. MESERVE: The issue that Doug just brought up and the seasonality of our fisheries, makes me think about how the comment that Dr. Davis made about no-targeting closures being something that he wouldn't be comfortable doing without an addendum. I think I would put harvest closures in that as well.

It's just such a complex item that I struggle to see the Board being able to take an action without an addendum and public comment on that process. But I actually had a question about the projections for Dr. Drew. There is going to be an assumption made about the 2024 catch in those projections that will of course incorporate our management measures that were implemented this year in them.

I'm wondering what type of assumptions the TC will make about catch in future years out. We talked about how you have the five-years of poor recruitment are going to influence the abundance in the spawning stock in those projections. As numbers decline, what kind of assumptions will be made about recreational catch? Catch in total, but recreational catch in particular, we know it's not a one-to-one liner response of angler effort to abundance.

DR. DREW: Right, the 2024 will be using sort of our best prediction of what catch is going to be under the new regulations for 2024. We'll incorporate sort of the expected reductions on the actions taken into 2024. The Striped Bass Technical Committee also has a work group that is working on trying to do a better job of predicting total catch, total removals under different management scenarios, under different abundance scenarios into the future. Some things, like the recreational demand model that has been developed for some Mid-Atlantic species.

But more tailored to striped bass, probably not as fancy, because we're just starting working out on this. But something similar of trying to predict what catch will be taking in to account the actual abundance, and how that effects effort or availability, as well as different management approaches. We'll look at our suite of like constant catch on the task as well, but we'll also be trying to develop some better projections of what we think X could be, based on what we've seen in the past.

CHAIR WARE: Mike Luisi, you're next.

MR. LUISI: I want to thank you for allowing the Board the opportunity to provide input to this process to the TC. We're going to be sitting around this table in October, it will be in Annapolis. We'll be having this discussion again. As much as I appreciate all the thoughts and comments, I think it's clear to me, and these are complicated issues.

Earlier just this afternoon, an hour and a half ago, we kind of came to the conclusion that even something as simple as a survey requires a little extra thought and time to prepare in a way that is going to be meaningful. I think that, and I agree, and I had a running list in my head with all the people who have spoken about what I agree with them on, but I've lost that since it started, that was a while ago.

But I do agree with a lot of what has been said. I think the proportional reductions, whether they are recreational or commercial, I think is something to consider, to bring back into the fold. I like the idea that Jason brought up about the sectors, and possibly exploring some type of split mode options for moving into the future.

What I find to be challenging, and I'm sitting here thinking, okay over the last hour we've heard a number of really good ideas. But in reality, in October, if the Board decides to move forward with something, it's going to have to be pretty simple. Nothing that I've heard today is very simple. Even some of the things that I would assume to be simple, for those comments regarding seasonal closures that may be more challenging than what I have the background and knowledge to understand.

I don't want to go on and on about the decisions we have to make down the road. But I'm challenged right now in thinking about how we're going to take this discussion today, with all the other work that the Technical Committee and staff need to do, to prepare for the presentation of the assessment update, and then follow that up with management actions that I would assume would be expected to be taken in 2025. We're going to be facing some challenges.

To back up and to say that I think exploring the things that have been brought up today is a great idea. Again, I think it was good to ask the Board for that feedback. In reality though, I think what we are going to look at in October are going to have to be some pretty simple concepts, if we decide to take action without going through the normal addendum process, which we can do, based on our decisions earlier this year.

I just want to make sure that for the public's expectation on what we might be able to do. I think we're going to find some challenges in being able to do it all together. I think that is without the conservation equivalency dynamic that we've had in the past, I think there are going to be some challenges. But I'll look forward to seeing what the Technical Committee comes up with, and be ready to go in October.

CHAIR WARE: Emerson Hasbrouck, Steve Train, and then we are going to move on to our next agenda item. Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. HASBROUCK: Thank you, Dr. Drew for your presentation. My thoughts on options in October. What my thoughts are on options that we're going to have to choose in October, including my thoughts on no-targeting, are going to be guided by what we just, an hour or two ago, tasked the TC with doing, you know with those four sensitivity-runs.

I'm anxious to see what the results of those four sensitivity runs are going to show, and that is going to help me decide how I would like to

go forward in October. Also, I agree with John Clark that we need to take a look at proportional reductions. I agree with Jay Mac about split-mode options, and I agree with Marty Gary about long term projections.

You know our horizon should not be only 2029. We have to get a sense of what is going to happen after that. Then I have a process or procedural question. That is, can we both take action in October if it's warranted, take some action in October if it's warranted, as well as initiate another addendum at that time, for perhaps some options that are a little bit more complicated?

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Emerson, yes. The Board can take action via Board action if the assessment shows the stock has a less than 50 percent probability of rebuilding, and of course the Board can always initiate an addendum.

CHAIR WARE: Steve Train and then David Borden has assured he is very quick.

MR. STEPHEN TRAIN: Thank you, Madam Chair, I'm good. Everything I wanted to say has been said.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Steve, David Borden.

MR. BORDEN: I'll be very brief. Emerson raised the issue of targeting and non-targeting, and so my question is, has the Enforcement Committee every reviewed the experience that some of the states have had with that, Maryland, and if not, is it possible to get the Enforcement Committee to review the experience that some states have had, and then provide us whatever guidance they could provide us. I think that would be useful in anticipation, if we're going to consider the concept.

MS. FRANKE: As part of the Board Work Group on release mortality, enforceability is something the work group is reaching out to the states with current closures, as well as NOAA Fisheries about, so that should be included in the Work Group Report.

CHAIR WARE: All right, that was a great discussion. I thank everyone for their participation. I agree with Mike Luisi, this is quite daunting, and a lot of this is going to depend on what we see in October.

We will be prepared and take it as it comes. Our next agenda item is an update on the 2024 Winter Striped Bass Tagging Cruise. I believe Sig VanDrunen is going to provide us some update.

MS. FRANKE: Sig, if you're speaking, we can't hear you.

REVIEW AND POPULATE ADVISORY PANEL MEMBERSHIP

CHAIR WARE: While that gets flipped on, I'm actually going to go to Addendum Item Number 8, the Advisory Panel, Tina Burger. We'll do those and then we'll come back and see if Sig's audio is working.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, for the Advisory Panel nominations, there are two nominations, Tom Fote from New Jersey, a recreational angler from New Jersey, as well as Will Poston, recreational angler from the District of Columbia.

CHAIR WARE: Great, so Dennis Abbott, you're willing to make that motion. Can you read it into the record, please?

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: Move to approve Tom Fote representing New Jersey and Will Poston representing the District of Columbia to the Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

CHAIR WARE: Great, so a motion by Dennis Abbott, I saw a second by Joe Cimino. Is there any opposition to this motion? Yes, you would like to speak to the motion, Dennis?

MR. ABBOTT: I recognize the familiar name at the top of the list. I'm sure that he will be able to add a lot to the Advisory Panel, and I'm sure they will enjoy his presence there.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you, Dennis. I'll try again, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none; the motion is approved by consent.

UPDATE ON 2024 WINTER STRIPED BASS TAGGING CRUISE

CHAIR WARE: All right, we're going to try Sig's audio again, and see if we are able to hear.

MS. SIGNE VANDRUNEN: Do we have anything?

MS. FRANKE: Yes.

MS. VANDRUNEN: Awesome. That was really weird. I didn't really do anything to fix it. Apparently, it just decided. Today I am going to talk about the Striped Bass Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise. To get everyone on the same page, Maryland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, North Carolina DEQ and then Maryland DNR, coordinate and carry out the Atlantic Striped Bass Cooperative Tagging Program, which targets the offshore winter migratory stock.

These surveys began as trawl surveys from 1985 to 2010, and switched to a hook and line survey in 2011. This year in 2024, I acted as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Coordinator for the survey, but our coordinator position will switch over to our new database coordinator and biologist Victoria Lecce for 2025 on. This is the 13th consecutive year of offshore hook and line striped bass tagging collections. Captain Ryan and the Midnight Sun crew, fishery staff and volunteer anglers carried out a total of 12 surveys from January 15 to February 6.

Trips launched from Virginia Beach on January 15, 16 and 22. The team departed Virginia Beach and fished up the coast as they traveled to Ocean City, where staff fished from January 24, 26 and 27. Then the Midnight Sun would make its return to Virginia Beach to target rockfish on January 31 and then February 1st, 2nd, 4th, 8th and 9th.

Poor weather conditions prevailed throughout our season, and it delayed the initial start date set for January 1, and reduced consistent public reports of migrating fish. Some public reports we received on striped bass came from New Jersey, and mostly the Chesapeake Bay. On January 24, our team collected 39 fish and tagged 38 of the 39, while fishing offshore of Ocean City, and all remaining trips did not yield fish. Since 2011, the ASMFC has caught 8,601 fish and has tagged 8,439 of these fish over the course of 136 survey trips. This slide shows the movement of tagging trips, beginning in '85 with

our trawl surveys, and going on to the hook and line surveys. Unfortunately, they do not have the year displayed, but I just want to draw attention to this northern movement of our surveys to find fish. This tagging program is the only program that targets and tags the overwintering offshore migratory stock of striped bass, excluding the crew of the Midnight Sun, but including our data collection and fishing to win team about 75 anglers signed up for fishing slots over the course of the season.

Not all of our anglers were able to attend fishing trips, due to weather cancellations and other factors. The total cost incurred by our Fish and Wildlife Service for this year's tagging survey was \$3,916.00. This total included boat trips, boat fuel, travel for employees, coordinator salary, Fish and Wildlife Services gas, and then supplies.

The 35K of NOAA provided ACFCMA funds, covered the cost of the hook and line survey. However, this left Fish and Wildlife Service to cover all the other costs incurred by the MDFWCO related to the management of the coastwide striped bass, horseshoe crab, and sturgeon tagging databases.

The cost to run those programs is around \$36,000.00 in supplies posted, et cetera, but does not cover any of the staff salaries. I just have one more slide next that shows a breakdown of the hook and line survey sites versus the trawl sites. With that we can start discussion.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you very much, Sig. Marty Gary had actually requested this be put on the agenda, so Marty, I'll go to you if you want to make any comments. But the funding for this has always been year to year, so I think we wanted to flag this for the Board, just so folks are aware of the data that is being collected. Marty, do you want to comment?

MR. GARY: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I think everyone around the table knows I've been a pretty strong advocate for the continuity of the survey. I'll ask the obligatory question, Katie,

because I know I've asked you before. Could you characterize the value of this now, it's pushing toward a 40-year dataset for us. Thank you, and I might have one follow up.

DR. DREW: This information is not currently used directly in the assessment. I think it is our goal for the next benchmark assessment to be able to use these tagging data from this program and from the state tagging program, more directly into a more spatially structured model, or potentially incorporate it.

We do the estimates of total mortality during the benchmark process from these surveys, and so I think we haven't fully recognized the potential benefits of this information, and we've been held back by our modeling framework. But we continue to develop that, and hopefully we will be able to more fully utilize and leverage these data in the assessment going forward.

I think it's not fully clear yet from our analyses, you know what is the value of the winter tagging cruise on the offshore mixed populations versus the state-specific tagging programs that also continue. But it is as Sig pointed out, kind of a unique dataset, or a unique timing of when those fish are tagged and what we are able to get from that going forward. I hope that is helpful.

MR. GARY: Thanks, Katie, and I'll just simply say, you know we have this discussion every year, usually it's in October, as we approach the deadline to determine whether or not we have the funding to go forward. Again, it's a dataset that is pushing toward 40 years, only data we collect on the wintering grounds, which as we saw in Sig's presentation is dramatically changed. Not only are the fish further north, but they are further offshore.

I just put it out there, I'm hoping instead of having the conversation every year and pleading to see if we can somehow come up with the money, we as a Board somehow with all of our collective partnership, we could figure out a way to fund this. I guess my next step if we don't get that is I'll start a Go Fund Me campaign and everybody can contribute. I'll turn it back to you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR WARE: I would encourage folks to discuss this between now and October. If folks want a call let me know, I'm happy to set one up if that would be helpful. Any other burning questions or comments? Okay, I did say I would provide Captain Newberry an opportunity for a quick public comment at the end of our meeting today. Captain Newberry, if you are on, I will need two minutes for your comment.

MS. TONI KEARNS: Captain Newberry, if you are on, can you please raise your hand.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR WARE: Okay, with that I think we are at Other Business. Is there any other business before this Board? Otherwise, I look for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Ray Kane, second by, I think Steve Train raised his hand. Thank you.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 6, 2024)