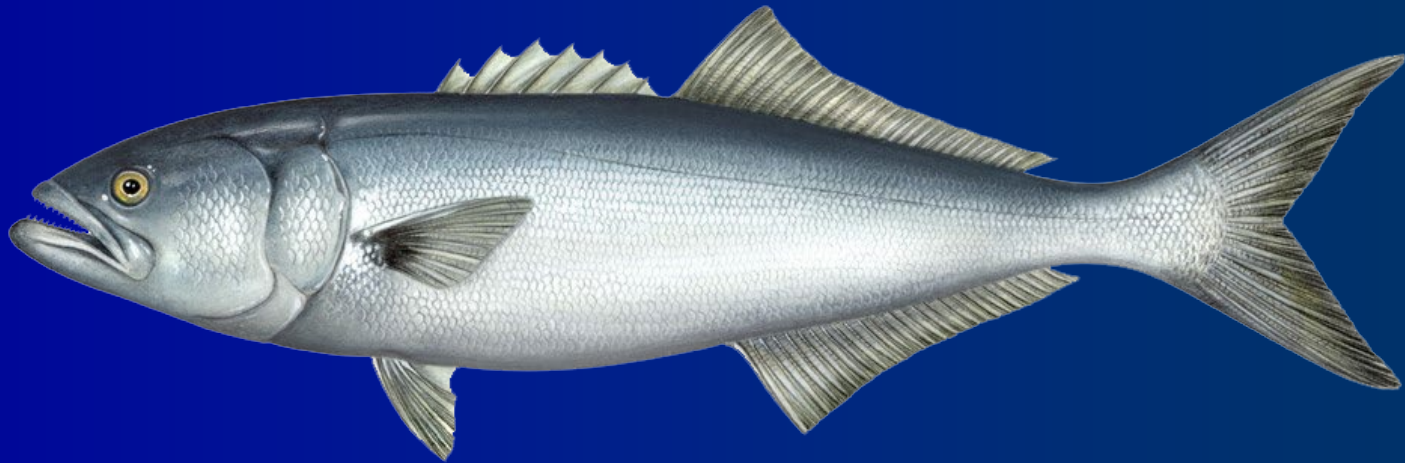




Atlantic Bluefish



Joint Council/Board Meeting

May 6, 2020

Outline & Objectives

- Amendment Goal
- Timeline
- Review public comment summary
- Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) summary and associated action items
- Board & Council discussion on Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Draft Amendment
 - Address each action item



Amendment Goal

The goal of this amendment is to review and possibly revise the allocation between the commercial and recreational fisheries and the commercial allocations to the states. This action is needed to rebuild the bluefish stock, avoid overages, achieve optimum yield, prevent overfishing, and reduce the need for quota transfers.



Timeline



Supplemental Scoping

- Comment period Feb. 6 – Mar. 17
- 11 hearings (MA-FL)
- 273 comments
- Issues 1-6
 1. FMP Goals and Objectives
 2. Commercial/Recreational Sector Allocations
 3. Commercial Allocations to the States
 4. Transfers (rec. to comm. and commercial state-to-state)
 5. Rebuilding Plan
 6. Other



FMP Goals and Objectives

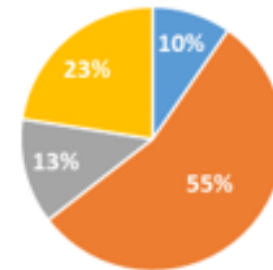
Amendment 1 Bluefish FMP Goals and Objectives

- The goal of the management plan is to conserve the bluefish resource along the Atlantic coast.
 - Objective: **Increase understanding of the stock** and of the fishery.
 - Objective: **Provide the highest availability** of bluefish to U.S. fishermen while maintaining, within limits, traditional uses of bluefish.
 - Objective: **Provide for cooperation** among the coastal states, the various regional marine fishery management councils, and federal agencies involved along the coast to enhance the management of bluefish throughout its range.
 - Objective: **Prevent recruitment overfishing.**
 - Objective: **Reduce the waste** in both the commercial and recreational fisheries.



FMP Goals and Objectives

Issue 1: FMP Goals and Objectives	Number of comments
Supports status quo	3
Goals and objectives should be re-evaluated and/or revised	17
Supports maintaining one or more of the current objectives	4
Bait/Snapper fishery is important	7

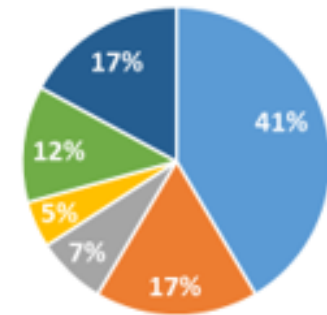


Suggested Revisions:

- Account for the needs of the bait/snapper fishery
- Emphasize the importance of shore-based fishing
- Encompass environmental conditions/shifting baselines
- Maximize abundance
- Reflect the value of bluefish to the recreational fishery
 - Intrinsic value of a released fish
 - Catch-and-release

Commercial/Recreational Allocation

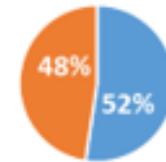
Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocation	Number of comments
Supports status quo	17
Increase commercial allocation	7
Decrease commercial allocation	3
Increase recreational allocation	2
Decrease recreational allocation	0
Use revised MRIP to update allocations/revise time series	5
New allocation suggestion	7



- Comments for status quo
 - MRIP data is unreliable
 - No reduction to commercial quota
 - No change to allocations so long as the ability to transfer quota remains
- Update time series (e.g. Most recent 10 years)
- Several comments support the use of catch-based allocations

Commercial Allocations to the States

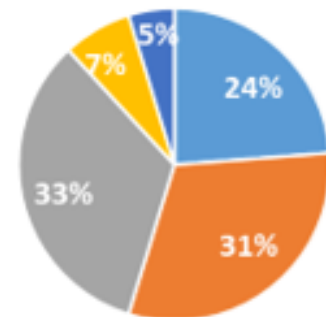
Issue 3: Commercial Allocations to the States	Number of comments
Supports status quo	11
Alter commercial allocations to the states	10



- Opinion split by the north-south divide
- Comments in support of status quo:
 - Status quo until stock rebuilt
 - Prefer to utilize transfers rather than reallocate
- Comments in support of reallocation:
 - Base allocation on last 10 years of landings
 - States repeatedly underutilizing quota should face reductions
 - Reallocate quota to the northern states

Quota Transfer Processes

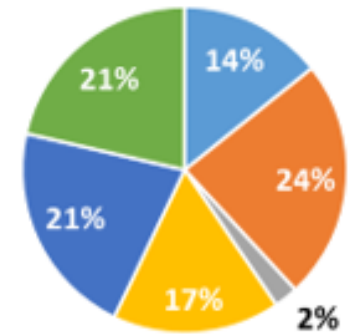
Issue 4: Quota Transfer Processes	Number of comments
Supports status quo transfer from recreational to commercial sector	10
Do not allow transfer from recreational to commercial sector	13
Supports status quo state-to-state transfers	14
Do not allow state-to-state transfers	3
New transfer suggestion	2



- Comments in opposition to sector transfer:
 - Sector transfers increase fishing pressure on the stock
 - Goes against the catch and release nature of the fishery
 - No transfers during rebuilding
- New transfer suggestion: make sector transfers bidirectional
- Majority support state-to-state transfers
 - State-to-state transfers offer flexibility and economic opportunity

Rebuilding Plan

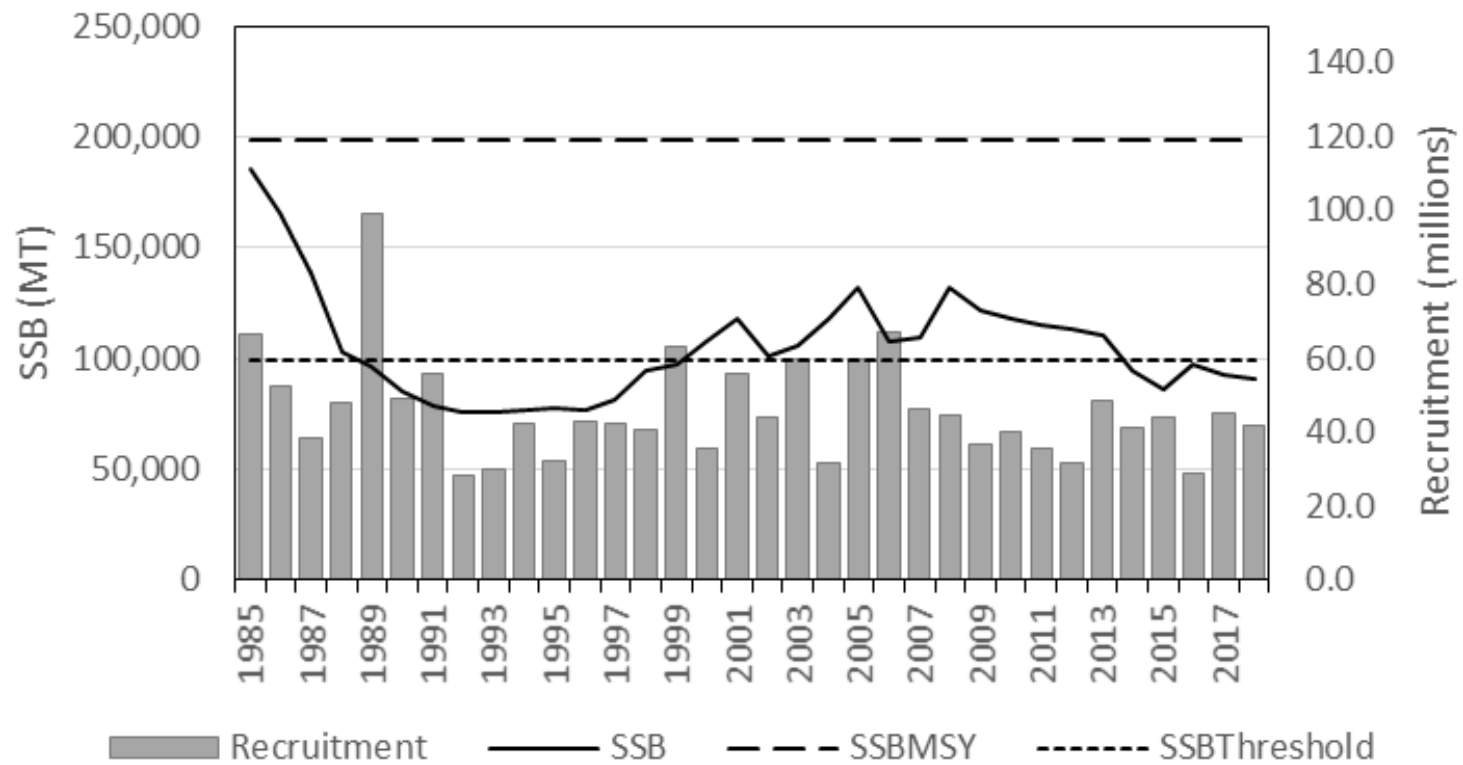
Issue 5: Rebuilding Plan	Number of comments
Stock should be rebuilt quickly	6
Stock should be rebuilt within a long time frame with minimal change to management measures	10
Supports constant harvest under the current ABC	1
Stock is affected by environment/further research is needed	7
Doubts the overfished status/stock status cyclical	9
Other	9



- Two points of view on rebuilding
 - Rebuild as quickly as possible
 - Rebuild the stock over 10 years to allow more fishing to occur in the short term
- Why is SSB_{MSY} at a level the fishery has never been before?

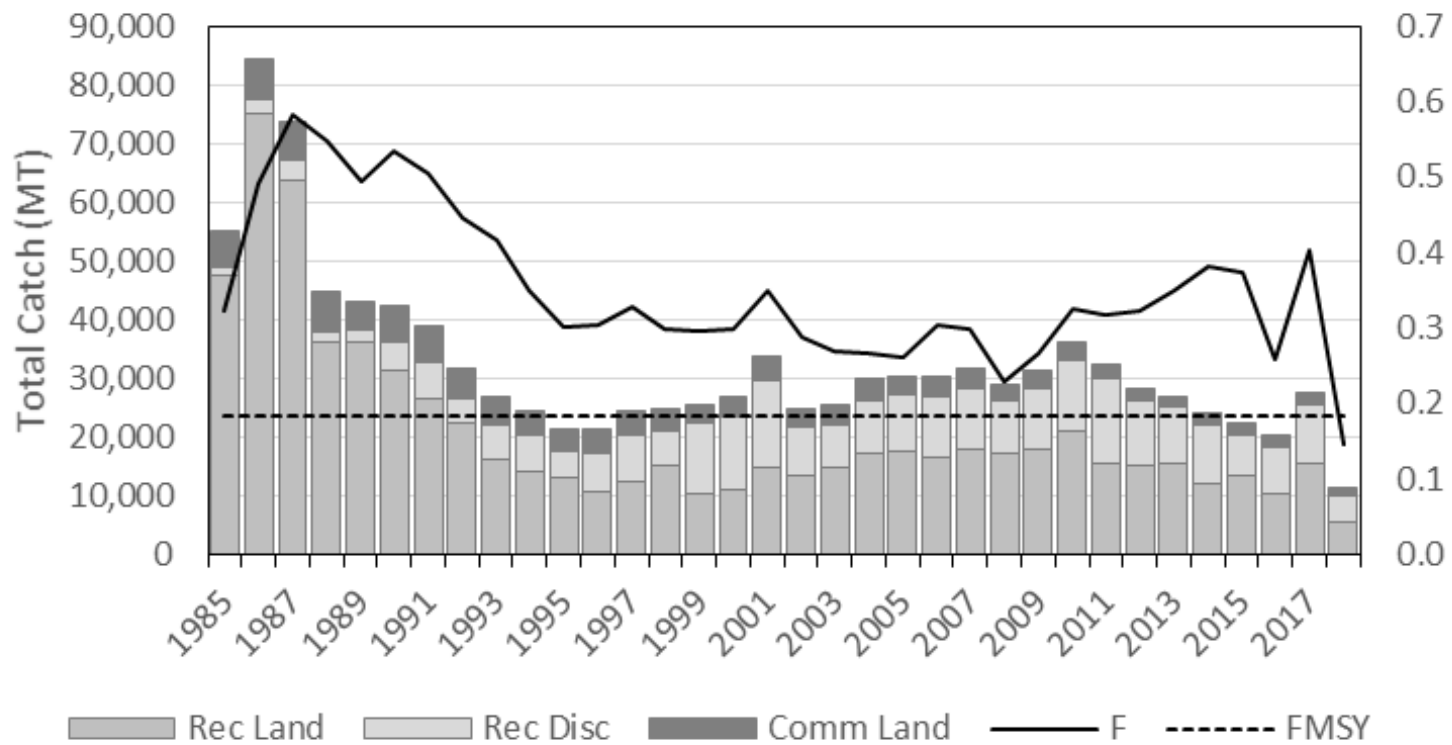
Updated Stock Status

Atlantic bluefish SSB and Recruitment



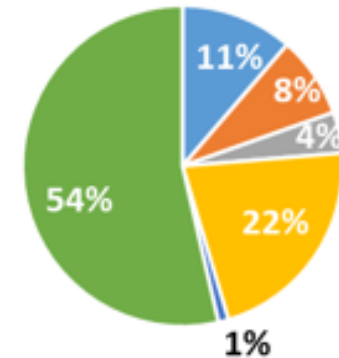
Updated Stock Status

Atlantic bluefish total catch and Fishing Mortality



Other Issues

Issue 6: Other Issues	Number of comments
For-hire sector separation or allowance	11
Doubts MRIP data/greater transparency needed	8
Status quo bag limit	4
Increase bag limit	21
Decrease bag limit	1
Other	52



- For-hire sector separation or allowance
 - Many other stakeholders oppose a separate for-hire sector or allowance
- Majority support increasing the bag limit
- Large variety of “other” comments

Issue 6 Continued

- Additional comments given under issue 6
 - Add a minimum size limit
 - Identify the intrinsic value of fish left in the water
 - Emphasize the catch-and-release aspect of the fishery
 - Maximize abundance
 - Address the discard mortality assumption rates
 - Ecosystem based management
 - More research on stock dynamics needed
 - Close the fishery until it is rebuilt
 - Georgia DNR – *de minimis* request



For-Hire Sector Separation

- Public comments included two methods of for-hire sector separation
 - For-hire sub-ACL
 - For-hire “allowance”
- Reasons for:
 - Catch a small portion of overall recreational catch
 - For-hire fleet is better managed under VTR data
 - Potential for more consistent management measures
- Reasons against:
 - Is it fair and equitable?
 - Complicates enforcement



FMAT Report

- The FMAT met via webinar on April 13th

Name	Role/Expertise	Agency
Matthew Seeley	FMAT Chair	MAFMC
Danielle Palmer	Protected Resources	NMFS GARFO
David Stevenson	Habitat Conservation	NMFS GARFO
Cynthia Ferrio	Sustainable Fisheries	NMFS GARFO
Ashleigh McCord	NEPA	NMFS GARFO
Tony Wood	Population Dynamics	NEFSC
Matthew Cutler	Social Sciences	NEFSC
Samantha Werner	Economist	NEFSC
Dustin Colson Leaning	Plan Coordinator	ASMFC
Mike Celestino	Bluefish Technical Committee	NJDFW



Issue 1: FMP Goals and Objectives

- Suggested approach
 - Continued revision through Council/Board & FMAT recommendations
 - Draft Amendment will contain revised and status quo “options”



Issue 1 **Action Items:** FMP Goals and Objectives

- Are there important aspects of the fishery not currently captured by the proposed goals and objectives?
- Should a goal/objective be removed entirely?
- Are there any recommended revisions?



Proposed FMP Goals and Objectives

- **Goal 1.** Conserve the bluefish resource through stakeholder engagement to maintain sustainable recreational fishing and commercial harvest.
 - **Objective 1:** Ensure the biological sustainability of the bluefish resource in order to maintain a sustainable bluefish fishery.
 - **Strategy 1.1:** Achieve and maintain a sustainable spawning stock biomass and rate of fishing mortality.
 - **Strategy 1.2:** Promote catch and release within the recreational fishery.
 - **Objective 2:** Maintain effective coordination between the National Marine Fisheries Service, Council, Commission, and member states to support the development and implementation of management measures.
 - **Strategy 2.1:** Promote compliance and effective enforcement of regulations.
 - **Strategy 2.2:** Promote science, monitoring, and data collection that support and enhance effective ecosystem-based management of the bluefish resource under changing environmental conditions.
- **Goal 2.** Provide access to the fishery throughout the management unit that reflects constituent preferences.
- **Goal 3.** Balance the needs and priorities of different user groups and optimize economic and social benefits from utilization of the bluefish resource.



Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocations

- The original FMP (1990)
 - 80% recreational and 20% commercial of the ACL
- Amendment 1 (1999)
 - 83% recreational and 17% commercial of the ACL
 - Developed from 1981-1989 data

		Amend 1	38 years	20 years	10 years	5 years	3 years	1 year
		1981-1989	1981-2018	1999-2018	2009-2018	2014-2018	2016-2018	2018
New MRIP	Rec	90%	87%	85%	87%	87%	87%	86%
	Comm	10%	13%	15%	13%	13%	13%	14%
Old MRIP	Rec	83%	77%	70%	72%	70%	69%	62%
	Comm	17%	23%	30%	28%	30%	31%	38%



Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocation **Action Items**

- Which time series should be considered for further development?
- FMAT recommends minimum of 10-year time series
- FMAT recommends catch-based allocations
 - Should both catch and landings-based allocations be further developed?

		20 years	10 years	5 years
		1999-2018	2009-2018	2014-2018
Landings-Based	Rec	85%	87%	87%
	Comm	15%	13%	13%
Catch-Based	Need Council/Board direction on discards			



Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocation: Discards **Action Items**

- There are currently two methods of calculating recreational discards for management use.
 - NEFSC method
 - Used in stock assessments
 - MRIP method (used to set the 2020-2021 specs)
 - Used by GARFO for catch accounting
- Which method should be used in developing catch-based allocations?



Issue 2: Commercial/Recreational Allocations **Action Items**

- What other approaches should be developed for consideration?
 - Trigger-based approach
 - Socioeconomic
 - Any others?



Issue 3: Commercial Allocations to the States

■ Amendment 1 (1999)

- Developed from 1981-1989 data
- Trends in state harvest have shifted, especially with annual state-to-state transfers in recent years

State	ME	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC	SC	GA	FL
1981-1989 (%)	0.67	0.41	6.72	6.81	1.27	10.38	14.82	1.88	3	11.88	32.06	0.04	0.01	10.06
2009-2018 (%)	0.01	0.09	11.06	10.77	1.17	21.87	13.52	0.43	1.83	5.89	29.03	n/a	0.00	4.33
2016-2018 (%)	0.00	0.00	10.18	12.93	1.65	21.73	8.95	0.32	1.32	5.09	31.09	n/a	0.00	6.73

*Color indicates average state share is more than one standard deviation **below** or **above** allocation % in FMP

Dealer Data



Issue 3: Commercial Allocations to the States **Action Items**

- Which time series should be considered?
- Should both catch and landings-based allocations be further developed?
 - FMAT recommends the use of landings-based allocations
 - Commercial discards are considered negligible in the stock assessment



Issue 4: Commercial State-to-State Transfers

- FMAT recommends status quo
 - Very useful tool for adaptive management
 - If removed, ensure transfers are added as a frameworkable action

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Average
ME	0	-52,000	-25,000	-45,000	0	0	0	0	0	-45,000	-30,000	-32,000	0	-17,615
NH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	-20,000	0	6,154
MA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	45,000	250,000	225,000	0	55,385
RI	0	60,000	155,000	-50,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	180,000	132,000	150,338	55,949
CT	0	0	0	-20,000	-75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-7,308
NY	0	250,000	450,000	455,000	425,000	0	200,000	50,000	300,000	250,000	550,000	420,000	0	257,692
NJ	0	0	309,125	0	0	0	0	0	-300,000	-50,000	0	-40,000	-50,000	-10,067
DE	0	-15,000	-80,000	-90,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-50,000	0	-18,077
MD	0	-45,000	-50,000	-50,000	0	0	0	0	0	-50,000	0	-50,000	0	-18,846
VA	0	-525,000	-350,000	0	-150,000	0	0	0	0	0	-250,000	-210,000	-338	-114,257
NC	0	652,000	0	-100,000	0	0	0	-100,000	-200,000	0	-550,000	-225,000	-100,000	-47,923
SC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-150,000	0	-11,538
GA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FL	0	-325,000	-409,125	-100,000	-200,000	0	-200,000	-50,000	0	-250,000	-150,000	0	0	-129,548

Issue 4: Commercial State-to-State Transfers **Action Items**

- Should this management tool be further developed?
- If so, how?
- Do not adjust this provision?



Issue 4: Sector Transfer (Rec to Comm)

Year	RHL	Comm. Quota (No Transfer)	Transfer	Comm. Quota (With Transfer)	Comm. Landings	Pounds of Transfer Used	% of Transfer used*
2000	25,750,000	9,580,000	0	9,580,000	7,499,868	N/A	N/A
2001	28,260,000	6,430,000	3,150,000	9,580,000	8,049,445	1,619,445	51.41%
2002	16,370,000	4,567,000	5,933,000	10,500,000	6,432,102	1,865,102	31.44%
2003	26,790,000	6,339,000	4,161,000	10,500,000	6,746,753	407,753	9.80%
2004	21,350,000	5,415,000	5,085,000	10,500,000	7,545,541	2,130,541	41.90%
2005	20,350,000	5,246,000	5,254,000	10,500,000	6,558,577	1,312,577	24.98%
2006	16,720,000	2,713,000	5,367,000	8,080,000	6,339,871	3,626,871	67.58%
2007	19,070,000	3,910,000	4,780,000	8,690,000	7,017,307	3,107,307	65.01%
2008	20,450,000	3,622,000	4,088,000	7,710,000	5,727,873	2,105,873	51.51%
2009	19,530,000	4,992,000	4,838,000	9,830,000	6,478,727	1,486,727	30.73%
2010	18,630,000	4,823,000	5,387,000	10,210,000	6,665,481	1,842,481	34.20%
2011	17,810,000	4,608,000	4,772,000	9,380,000	5,082,547	474,547	9.94%
2012	17,460,000	5,268,000	5,052,000	10,320,000	4,657,175	0	0
2013	14,070,000	4,394,000	4,686,000	9,080,000	4,123,240	0	0
2014	13,620,000	4,120,000	3,340,000	7,460,000	4,771,775	651,775	19.51%
2015	12,950,000	3,661,000	1,579,000	5,240,000	4,024,784	363,784	23.04%
2016	11,580,000	3,303,000	1,577,000	4,880,000	4,077,677	774,677	49.12%
2017	9,650,000	3,507,000	5,033,000	8,540,000	3,885,875	378,875	7.53%
2018	11,580,000	3,705,000	3,535,000	7,240,000	2,203,654	0	0

*% of transfer used varies by state

Issue 4: Sector Transfer (Rec to Comm)

Action Items

- FMAT requests guidance from the Council/Board on whether additional modifications to the transfer process should be considered.
- Additional modifications for consideration:
 - Conditions that allow/prevent transfers
 - The transfer cap (10.5 M lbs as the CQ)
 - Bidirectional sector transfer (Comm -> Rec?)



Issue 5: Rebuilding Plan

- MSA requires that rebuilding plan be initiated by November 2021
- FMAT supports removing the rebuilding plan from the Amendment
 - Concerns about rushing the development of alternatives
- Staff recommends leaving rebuilding in for now
 - Efficiencies associated with keeping the development of alternatives together



Issue 5: Rebuilding Plan

- FMAT has selected 5 projection scenarios
 - Constant harvest of 7,385 metric tons (current ABC)
 - Rebuilt by ~2025 (estimated SSB = ~229,000 mt)
 - Constant F that rebuilds the stock within 10 years
 - Constant F that rebuilds the stock within 7 years
 - Constant harvest strategy that will allow the fishery to rebuild within 10 years – highest catch possible
 - Rebuilding strategy that utilizes P* approach
 - Considers the risk of overfishing given the current stock biomass compared to the target biomass



Issue 5: Rebuilding Plan **Action Items**

- Are additional projection scenarios needed?
- Should the rebuilding plan be removed or kept within the amendment?

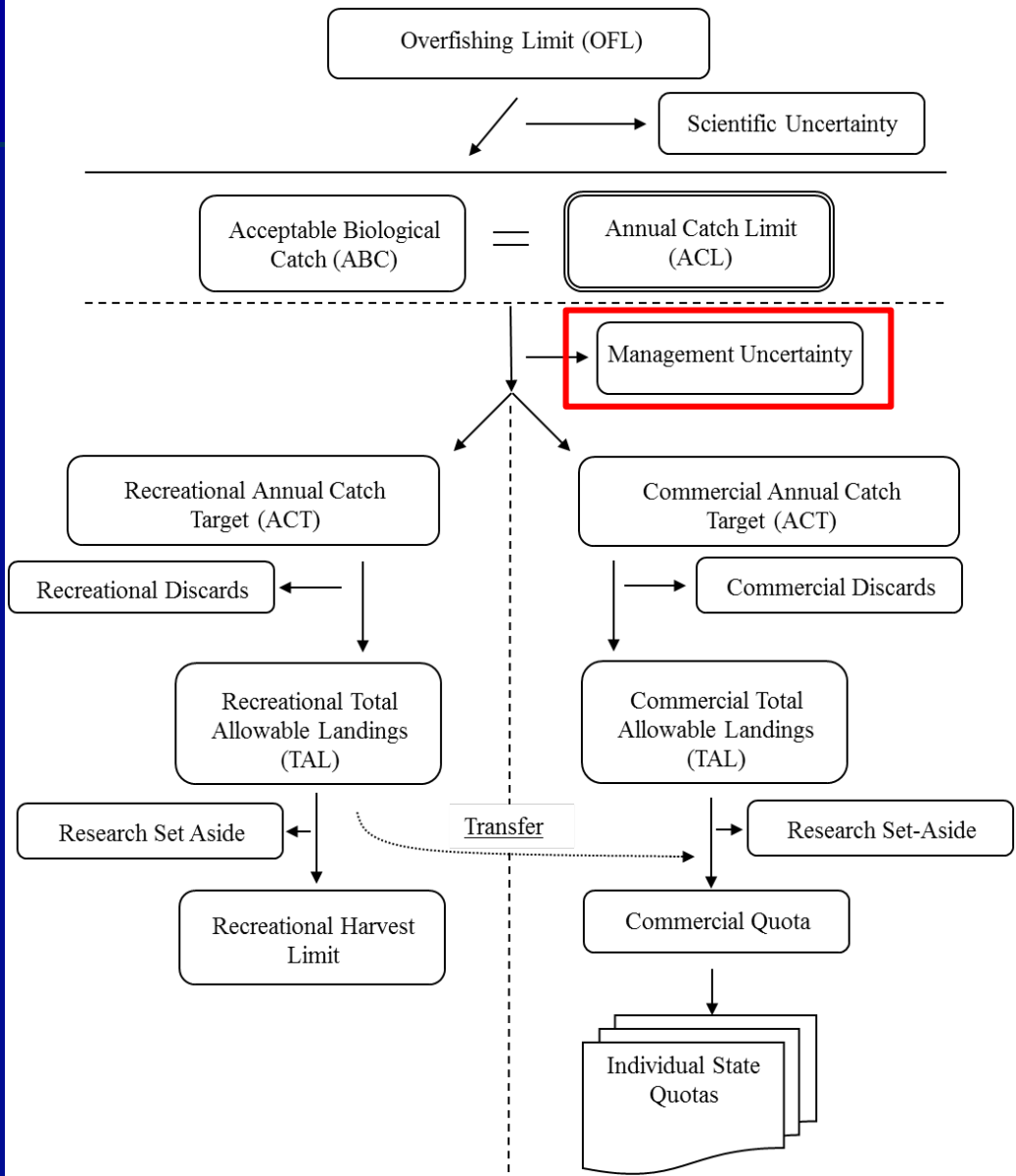


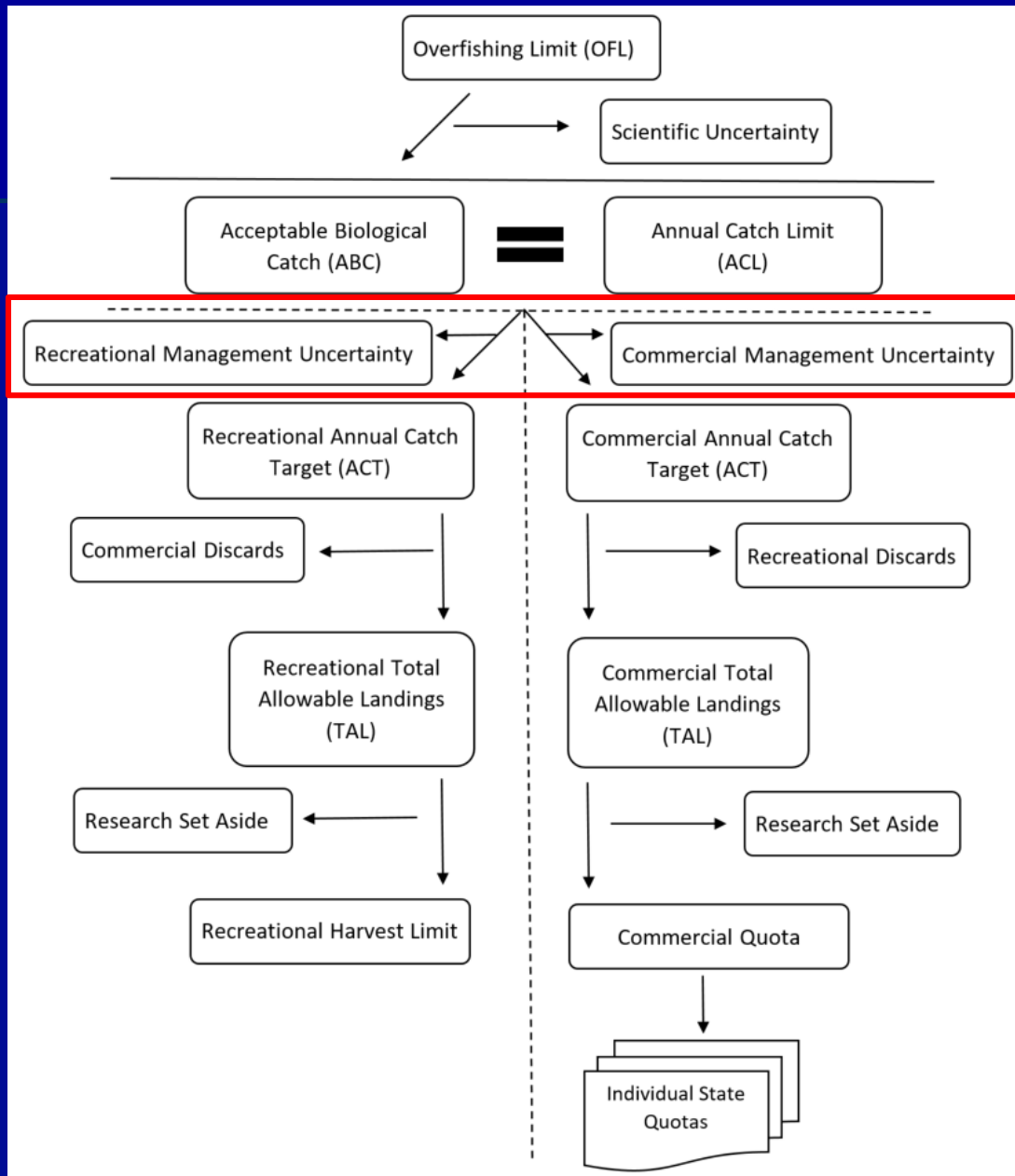
Issue 6: Other Issues - Sector Specific Management Uncertainty **Action Items**

- FMAT recommends further development of “sector-specific management uncertainty”
 - No accepted standard on how recreational discard projections are estimated
 - Recreational management uncertainty is high
 - Commercial management uncertainty remains low



Atlantic Bluefish Flowchart





Issue 6: Other Issues - For-hire Sector Separation

- Further develop for-hire sector separation?
 - For-hire sub-ACL
 - For-hire “allowance”

Bluefish Time Series	Years	Private/Shore %	For-Hire %
Base Years	1981-1989	86%	14%
5 Most Recent Years	2014-2018	99%	1%
10 Most Recent Years	2009-2018	98%	2%
15 Most Recent Years	2004-2018	98%	2%

Percentages are based on MRIP catch (A+B1+B2) in number of fish.

Issue 6: Other Issues - For-hire Sector Separation **Action Items**

- Remove or pursue further?
- Allocations could be based on:
 - Landings: A+ B1
 - Catch: $A + B1 + B2$ *or* $A + B1 + (B2*0.15)$
- Sector allowance
 - Beneficial to further develop a policy on how separate measures are developed, accountability, etc.
 - FMAT concerned about fair and equitable access across user groups



Next Steps. Questions?

- May: FMAT will meet to develop draft alternatives
- June: Presentation of draft alternatives at the joint meeting
- June/July: Revise draft alternatives with the FMAT based on Council/Board input
- August: Presentation of revised draft alternatives at the joint meeting
 - Approve for input into a public hearing document
- December: Approve a public hearing document at the joint meeting

