



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Meetings

page 2

Species Profile

Black Sea Bass

page 3

ASMFC Releases 2024 Annual Report

page 5

ASMFC 2025 Spring Meeting Preliminary Agenda

page 6

Fishery Management Actions

Recreational Measures

Setting Process

Framework/Addenda

Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection

Amendment

page 8

Proposed Fishery Management Actions

American Lobster Draft Addendum XXXII

Horseshoe Crab Draft Addendum IX

Northern Shrimp Draft Amendment 4

Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum III
page 9

ACCSP Update

page 10

Comings & Goings

page 11

Employees of the Quarter

page 12

ASMFC Launches Redesigned Website to Enhance Access and Engagement

In mid-February, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) announced the launch of its completely redesigned website, offering a more modern, engaging, and informative experience for users. This redesign marks a significant step toward strengthening stakeholder engagement and improving access to essential fisheries management information.

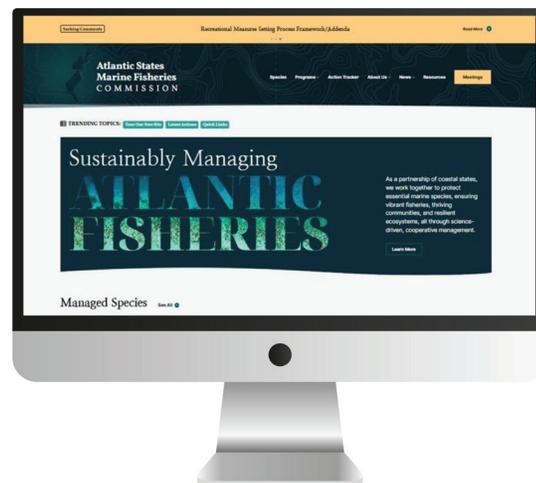
While the previous website served the Commission well for over 12 years, it had become outdated in both design and functionality. The new site addresses these limitations with a streamlined interface, improved navigation, and enhanced content delivery. While the layout of many sections has been updated, most content remains the same, now presented in a cleaner, more accessible format. To ease the transition, the [old website](#) will remain live for several months, serving as an interim archive for users to access older documents that may not be on the new site yet.

The new website directly supports Goal 6 of ASMFC's 2025 Action Plan: to strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission. The redesign enhances transparency, promotes public understanding of the Commission's work, and facilitates broader participation in fisheries management through improved outreach and technology use.

To assist with navigation, the site provides a comprehensive guide detailing key sections, including About, Species, Programs, Public Comment Opportunities (via Action Trackers), News, and Resources. This detailed walk-through will help you navigate the site effectively, ensuring you make the most of the tools and information available.

A notable feature of the new website is the [Action Tracker](#), a centralized hub for up-to-date information on the key issues affecting Atlantic coastal fisheries management. This platform, an expansion of the former public comment page, offers detailed insights into ongoing challenges, regulatory discussions, and the steps being taken to address them. Each tracker includes issue overviews, timelines, relevant documents, and multiple options for submitting comment, including a new online form. Additionally, a banner across the top of the website alerts visitors when pending actions listed on the Action Tracker are available for public comment.

Visit the new ASMFC website at <https://asmfc.org> to explore and stay informed about the Commission's efforts to sustainably manage Atlantic coast fisheries.



Upcoming Meetings

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Joseph Cimino (NJ), Chair
Dan McKiernan (MA), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal,
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield,
Science Director

Toni Kerns,
Fisheries Policy Director

Laura C. Leach,
Director of Finance & Administration

Geoff White,
ACCSP Director

Tina L. Berger, Editor
Director of Communications
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone
asmfc.org
info@asmfc.org

April 14 (4:30 - 5:30 PM)
[Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel](#)

April 14 - 17
[New England Fishery Management Council](#), Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT

April 16 (10 - 11 AM)
[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

April 21 (10 AM - Noon)
[Tautog Stock Assessment Subcommittee](#)

April 28 (10 AM - 2 PM)
[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

April 29 (9 - 11 AM)
[Atlantic Menhaden Age Exchange Review](#)

May 1 (9 - 11 AM)
[Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel](#), Hyatt Place Portland-Old Port, 433 Fore Street, Portland, Maine

May 1 (Noon - 3 PM)
[Northern Shrimp Section](#), Hyatt Place Portland-Old Port, 433 Fore Street, Portland, Maine

May 5 - 8
[ASMFC 2025 Spring Meeting](#), Westin Crystal City, 1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA

May 13 (1 - 2:30 PM)
[Atlantic Herring Days Out Meeting](#)

May 19 (1 - 3 PM)
[Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee](#)

June 3 - 5
[Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), Hilton Garden Inn Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3315 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA

June 9 - 13
[South Atlantic Fishery Management Council](#), Radisson Resort at the Port: 8701 Astronaut Blvd., Cape Canaveral, FL

June 17 (1 - 5 PM)
[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

June 18 (9 AM - Noon)
[Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee](#)

June 24 - 26
[New England Fishery Management Council](#), Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport, ME

July 9 (1 - 5 PM)
[Atlantic Menhaden ERP Work Group](#)

July 11 (9 AM - 1 PM)
[Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee](#)

ASMFC and MAFMC Consider Changes to the Recreational Management of this Abundant Resource

Introduction

Black sea bass (*Centropristis striata*) are an important recreational and commercial fishery ranging from Maine to Florida. There are two distinct stocks on the Atlantic coast, divided at Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The northern stock is jointly managed by the Commission in state waters (0-3 miles from shore) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore), while the southern stock is managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was implemented in 1997, instituting a commercial fishery quota and a recreational harvest limit (RHL) in order to reduce fishing mortality and recover the stock. The fishery was officially declared rebuilt in 2009. Due to warming waters, the distribution of the fishery and catches have expanded northward in recent years.

Based on the 2024 management track stock assessment, black sea bass are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The assessment found spawning stock biomass (SSB) to be well above the target level. Management actions currently in progress for black sea bass include (1) an amendment to consider managing the for-hire fishery separately from all other recreational fishing modes and/or to consider changes to recreational data collection for black sea bass, as well as summer flounder, scup, and bluefish; and (2) an addendum which explores options for a new recreational measure setting process as a replacement to the Percent Change Approach in Addendum XXXIV, to be in effect for 2026.

Life History

Black sea bass inhabit Atlantic coastal waters from the Gulf of Maine to the Florida Keys, concentrating in areas from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Canaveral, Florida. A temperate reef fish, black sea bass commonly inhabit rock bottoms near pilings, wrecks, and jetties. Black sea bass rely on their large mouth and swift ocean currents to catch prey, which include fish, crabs, mussels, and razor clams. Two distinct stocks (northern and southern) have overlapping ranges. The northern stock migrates seasonally, summering in northern inshore waters at depths of less than 120 feet and wintering in more southern offshore waters at depths of 240 to 540 feet. Spawning occurs off of New England in the late summer.

Black sea bass are protogynous hermaphrodites, which mean they start life as a female and then change sex to become males when they reach 9-13 inches (2-5 years of age). More than a third of females in the Mid-Atlantic reverse sexes between August and April after most fish have spawned. Even though some fish are males when they reach sexual maturity, most produce eggs when they first mature. Following transition, a sea bass will either become a dominant male, characterized by a larger size and a bright blue nuchal hump during spawning season (see accompanying photo), or a subordinate male that has few distinguishing features.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Black sea bass are highly sought after by both commercial fishermen and recreational anglers throughout the Mid-Atlantic. Fisheries change seasonally with changes in fish distribution. Inshore and more southern commercial fisheries primarily use fish pots and handlines. When fish move offshore in the winter, they are primarily caught in trawl fisheries targeting summer flounder, scup, and Loligo squid. Recreational fisheries generally occur during the period that sea bass are inshore (May to September), but season duration varies among the states.

continued on next page

Species Snapshot



Black Sea Bass
Centropristis striata

Management Unit: Massachusetts to North of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina

Common Names: Black will, chub, pinbass, old humpback

Family: Serranidae (true sea bass)

Interesting Facts

- They are protogynous hermaphrodites; about half the population changes sex from female to male between the ages of 2 and 5.
- Breeding males have vivid hues of fluorescent blue and green around the eyes and nape
- Larger male fish are commonly called "humpbacks" because of the pronounced lump of their foreheads; the lump is referred to as the nuchal hump.
- An older female can produce up to 1 million pelagic eggs.

Largest Landed: 10 lbs., 4 oz. (Virginia Beach, VA)

Maximum Age: 20 years

Length at Maturity: 7.48"

Stock Status: Not overfished and not experiencing overfishing



Dominant male black sea bass with characteristic nuchal hump (c) NEAMAP

Commercial landings have been recorded for black sea bass since the late 1800s. Since 1998, commercial landings have been primarily influenced by the commercial quotas. Between 1998 and 2007, landings averaged just under 3 million pounds. From 2008 to 2012, reduced quotas resulted in average landings of only 1.6 million pounds. From 2017-2023, higher quotas resulted in commercial landings of ranging between about 3 million pounds in 2018 to a time series high of over 5 million pounds in 2022. Commercial landings in 2023 were just under the coastwide quota of 4.8 million pounds. Commercial fishery discards historically represented a small fraction of total fishery removals from the stock at less than 0.4 million pounds per year, but have increased in recent years. From 2016-2023, commercial dead discards ranged from 1 million pounds in 2020 to over 2 million pounds in 2017.

Black sea bass are also an important recreational species in the Mid-Atlantic, commonly caught using squid and natural bait. After a peak in 1986 at 11 million pounds, recreational harvest averaged 5 million pounds annually from 1987 to 1997. Harvest generally increased from approximately 2 million pounds in 1998 to 9 million pounds in 2015. Harvest peaked at approximately 12 million pounds in 2016, 2017, and 2021, before declining in 2022 and 2023. In 2023, recreational harvest was 7.5 million pounds, which is the lowest recreational harvest since 2014. Recreational live discards, as a proportion of total catch, have generally increased over the time series, averaging 46% in the 1980s to 85% over the past decade. According to Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), total live recreational discards from Maine to Virginia were 35 million fish in 2023. Assuming 15% hook and release mortality, estimated recreational discard losses in 2023 were estimated to be 5 million fish, equal to 54% of the total recreational removals (harvest plus dead discards).

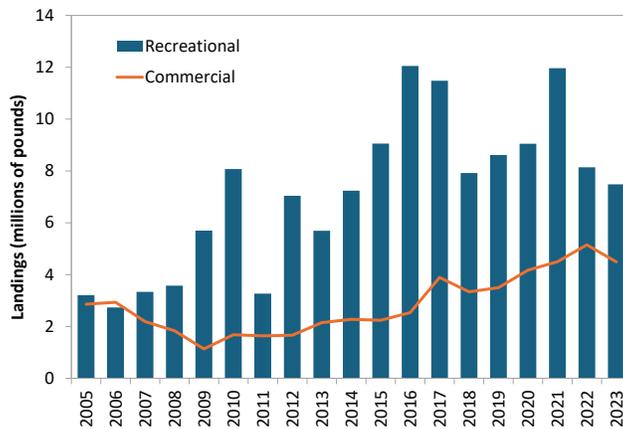
Stock Status

A management track assessment was peer reviewed in July 2024. The assessment updated a Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM) framework developed during a recent 2023 research track assessment with fishery-independent and -dependent data through 2023. The assessment found that the black sea bass stock

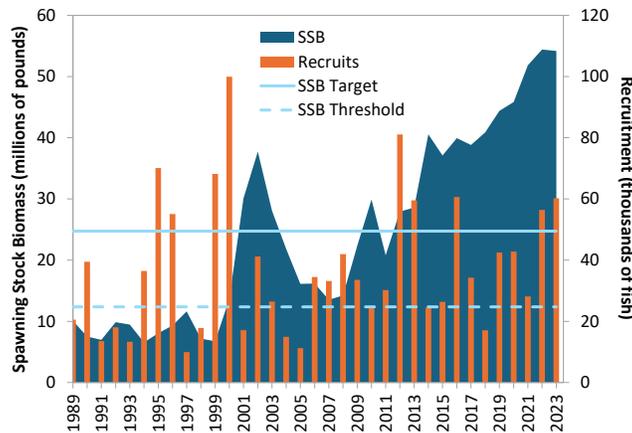
north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2023.

In 2023, SSB was estimated at 54 million pounds, over 2 times the biomass target of 24 million pounds. Fishing mortality in 2023 was estimated to be 0.82, 77% of the of the overfishing threshold proxy of 1.07.

Black Sea Bass Commercial and Recreational Landings
Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2024



Black Sea Bass Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment
Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2024



Recruitment in 2023 was estimated to be 60 million fish, above the 10-year (2014-2023) average of 39 million fish.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Black sea bass is managed jointly by the Commission and the Council under Amendment 13 to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass FMP (August 2002) and its subsequent addenda (Addenda XII-XXXIV). The objectives of the FMP are to reduce fishing mortality to assure overfishing does not occur and allow immature black sea bass to increase SSB; improve yield from the fishery; promote compatible regulations, and uniform and effective enforcement among states and between federal and state jurisdictions; and minimize regulations necessary to achieve the stated objectives.

The recreational fishery is currently managed on a regional basis using a combination of minimum size limits, bag limits, and fishing seasons to achieve a harvest target determined by the Percent Change Approach, as described in Addendum XXXIV. The coastwide commercial quota is

divided among the states annually. Specific management measures for the commercial fishery are set by each state, which may include minimum size limits, minimum mesh requirements for trawls, or a moratorium on entry into the fishery and closed seasons.

In June 2021, the Board and Council jointly approved final changes to the management program for black sea bass commercial fisheries. These changes include modifying the state allocations of the commercial black sea bass quota, adding the state allocations to the Council's FMP, and modifying the regulations for federal in-season closures. The Board adopted the allocations through Addendum XXXIII to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

continued on next page

FMP, while the Council recommended these changes to NOAA Fisheries through Amendment 23 to its FMP. These actions address significant changes in the distribution of black sea bass that have occurred since the original allocations were implemented in 2003 and also account for the historical dependence of the states on the black sea bass fishery. In August 2023, NOAA Fisheries partially approved Amendment 23, by approving changes to the commercial in-season quota trigger but chose not to add state-by-state quota allocations to the federal FMP. However, the state-by-state quota allocations for black sea bass remain in effect through the Commission's Addendum XXXIII.

In December 2021, the Board and the Council took final action on Amendment 22 to reevaluate the FMP's commercial and recreational allocations. The Board and Council agreed to modify the commercial and recreational black sea bass allocations from landings-based (49% commercial and 51% recreational) to catch-based (45% commercial and 55% recreational). This action aimed to address the allocation-related impacts of the revised recreational

catch and landings data provided by MRIP. The changes were effective January 1, 2023.

In June 2022, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) and the Council approved Addendum XXXIV and a Council Framework which modified the process for setting recreational measures and made minor modifications to the recreational accountability measures. The new process gives greater consideration to stock status when determining whether recreational measures should be restricted, liberalized, or remain unchanged for the upcoming two years. The new process was used starting in 2023 and will sunset no later than the end of 2025, with a goal of implementing an improved process by the beginning of 2026.

Current Actions

The Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Measures Setting Process Addenda explores options for a new recreational measure setting process as a replacement for the Percent Change Approach. The Policy Board and Council will take final action on the

addendum in early April 2025, to be in effect by 2026.

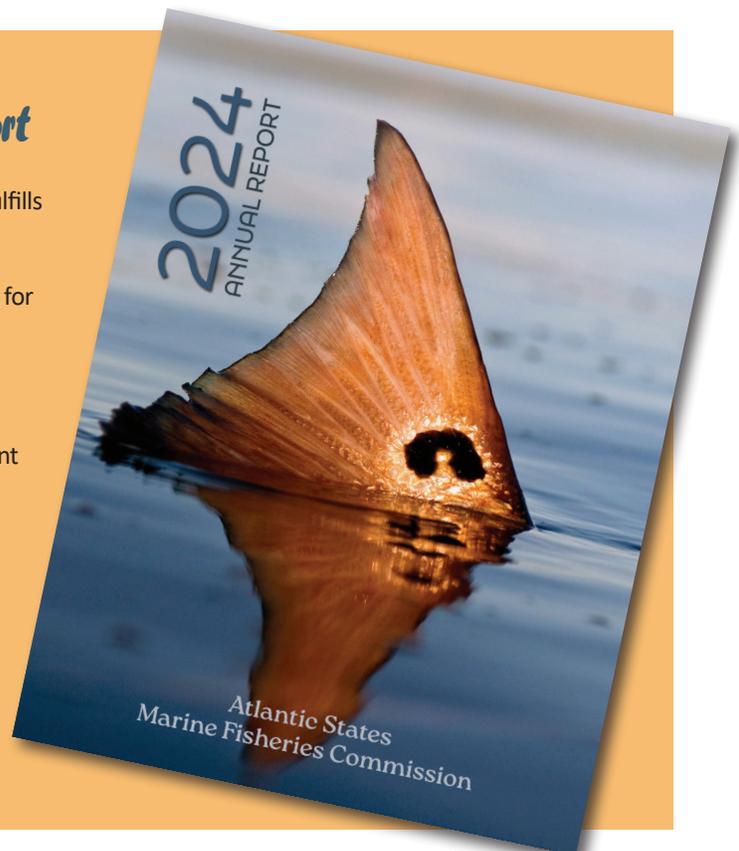
At their December 2024 joint meeting, the Policy Board and Council approved a Public Information Document for the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Sector Separation and Catch Collection Amendment. This amendment will consider options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from other recreational fishing modes (referred to as sector separation) and/or options related to recreational data collection, such as private angler reporting and enhanced vessel trip report requirements. Public scoping hearings were held in March and April 2025. The Policy Board and Council will review public comment, determine the scope of the action, and provide guidance to the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team on the initial development of draft management options at their meeting in early April 2025 (see page for a summary of the recent Council/Policy Board actions). For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, FMP Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

ASMFC Releases 2024 Annual Report

In March, the Commission released its 2024 Annual Report, which fulfills our obligation to inform Congress on the Commission's use of public funds, and provides stakeholders with an overview of activities and progress in carrying out our cooperative stewardship responsibilities for the marine, shell, and diadromous species under our care.

The report includes a quick guide to stock status for the 27 species groups the Commission manages; a fisheries management section, which focuses on species which had the most significant management or stock assessment activities in 2024; and sections highlighting our major accomplishments in 2024 in the areas of fisheries science, habitat conservation and fishery data collection and management.

Please visit the Commission's website at asmfc.org for additional information on any of our programs or activities. The report is available at <https://asmfc.org/resources/annual-report/2024-annual-report/>



ASMFC 2025 Spring Meeting

May 5-8, 2025

The Westin Crystal City
1800 Richmond Highway
Arlington, VA

Preliminary Agenda

This will be a hybrid meeting to allow for remote participation by Commissioners and interested stakeholders in all meetings except for the Law Enforcement Committee. The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

Webinar Link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/60738568308578650> (Webinar ID: 826-144-067)

Call In: +1 .562.247.8321, access code 112-047-383

MONDAY, MAY 5

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Progress Update on Benchmark Stock Assessment for American Lobster
- Consider Final Approval of Draft Addendum XXXII to Repeal Addendum XVII Minimum and Gauge Size Requirements
- Report from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts on Industry Meetings
- Review Report of Lobster Conservation Management Team Area 3
- Update on Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Alternative Gear Marking Amendment
- Discuss Vessel Tracking Rules

3:45 – 4:15 p.m. Spiny Dogfish Management Board

- Consider Approval of Technical Addendum to Correct the Longitude Value One Corner of the Delaware/Maryland Bycatch Reduction Area and Clarify the Bounds of the Mesh Size Requirement of Addendum VII

TUESDAY, MAY 6

9 – 10 a.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board

- Review and Consider Conservation Equivalency: Policy and Technical Guidance Document
- Progress Update on Ongoing Stock Assessments
- Reconvene on May 8

10:15 – 11:45 a.m. Sciaenids Management Board

- Consider Red Drum Technical Committee Report on Stock Assessment Follow-Up Tasks and Possible Management Response
- Progress Update on Atlantic Croaker Benchmark Stock Assessment

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Luncheon for Legislative and Governor Appointee Commissioners

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. Lunch Provided for Commissioners and Proxies

1:15 – 5:15 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Consider Terms of Reference for 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Consider Massachusetts Conservation Equivalency Proposal for Commercial Fishery Size Limit
- Consider Approval for Public Comment Draft Addendum III on Proposed Management Measures for 2026

1:30 – 5 p.m. Law Enforcement Committee

- Review and Discuss Enforcement of Commission Species
- Review and Discuss Ongoing Enforcement Activities (Closed Session)

continued on next page

6 – 7:30 p.m.

Annual Awards of Excellence Reception

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

8 – 10 a.m.

Executive Committee

- Review and Consider Approval of FY26 Budget
- Review White Paper on Board Voting and Virtual Meeting Standard Operating Practices and Procedures
- Future Annual Meetings
- Conduct Executive Director Performance Review (Closed Session)

8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Law Enforcement Committee (continued)

- State Agency Reports
- Tour of New Website

10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council**

- Consider Approval of 2026 Request for Proposals
- Program and Committee Updates

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.

Lunch Break

1:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Consider Final Report from Work Group on Precautionary Management in Chesapeake Bay
- Progress Update on 2025 Ecological Reference Point Benchmark Assessment
- Provide Direction to Technical Committee on 2026-2028 Stock Projections

3:30 – 4 p.m.

Update on Responsible Offshore Science Alliance for Commissioners

4:15 – 5 p.m.

Tautog Management Board

- Review Technical Committee Report on New York Study of Alternative Commercial Tags
- Progress Update on 2025 Tautog Stock Assessment Update
- Elect Vice-Chair

THURSDAY, MAY 8

8:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Consider Final Approval of Draft Addendum IX on Multiyear Specifications for Male Only Harvest
- Review Adaptive Resource Management Subcommittee Recommendations Regarding Input on Changes to Reward/Utility Functions
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

ISFMP Policy Board (continued)

- Executive Committee Report
- Review White Paper on Board Voting and Virtual Meeting Standard Operating Practices and Procedures
- Committee Reports
- Review Noncompliance Findings, if necessary

11:45 a.m. – Noon

Commission Business Session

- Consider Final Approval of Amendment 4 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp
- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations, if necessary

Public Comment Guidelines

To provide a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunities to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will ask members of the public to raise their hands to let the chair know they would like to speak. Depending upon the number of commenters, the board chair will decide how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic.

Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comments will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comments for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received three weeks prior to the start of a meeting week (April 14) will be included in the briefing materials.
2. Comments received by 5 PM on Tuesday, April 29 will be included in supplemental materials.
3. Comments received by 10 AM on Friday, May 2 will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting.

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail and email.

MAFMC & ASMFC Approve Changes to Process for Setting Recreational Management Measures for Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) have approved modifications to the process for setting recreational measures (bag, size, and season limits), as well as the recreational accountability measures, for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The Council recommended these changes through a framework action, and the Policy Board adopted these changes through Addendum XXXVI to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Addendum III to the Bluefish FMP. These changes are part of a broader long-term effort by both the Council and Commission to improve recreational management of these jointly managed species.

The current process for setting recreational measures, referred to as the Percent Change Approach, was implemented in 2023 and will sunset at the end of 2025. During a joint meeting last week in Gallop, New Jersey, the Council and Policy Board discussed several options to improve or replace the Percent Change Approach for 2026 and beyond. After reviewing public comments and recommendations from technical committees and advisory panels, the Council and Policy Board agreed to maintain the current process with several modifications based on lessons learned over the past few years. These changes will be implemented in two phases.

The first phase of changes aims to better account for stock status when setting measures and will create more opportunities for stability in management measures. The current system uses three biomass categories to guide whether measures should change; the revised approach adds a fourth category for stocks near their biomass target and establishes a separate process

for overfished stocks. These changes will take effect starting with the 2026 recreational measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The Council and Policy Board delayed the implementation of these changes for bluefish until 2028 to allow time for development of an appropriate methodology for evaluating the impacts of measures on bluefish harvest and discards. The bluefish stock has been under a rebuilding plan since 2022, and recreational measures will continue to be set based on the rebuilding plan until the stock is declared rebuilt.

The second phase of modifications, which will be implemented for setting 2030 recreational measures and beyond, will update the process to use a catch-based target. Unlike the current process – which focuses on achieving a specific level of predicted harvest – a catch-based approach aims to achieve a target level of total dead catch, including both harvest and dead discards. This approach will allow for more explicit consideration of how measures affect discards. Some advisors and members of the public raised concerns about the potential for this change to create greater instability in management measures. After extensive discussion of each approach, the Council and Policy Board delayed the transition to a catch-based target until 2030 to allow time for additional analysis on the potential impacts to measures.

The Council and Policy Board also approved changes to the recreational accountability measures. These changes will be effective starting in 2026 for all four species. Under these revisions, when an accountability measure is triggered due to recent overages of the recreational annual catch limits, managers will also consider if those overages contributed to overfishing when determining the appropriate response.

The Council will submit the framework to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and implementation, while the Commission's measures are final for state waters. Additional information about this action is available on the [Council](#) and [Commission](#) websites.

Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

In other related business, the Council and Policy Board also reviewed scoping comments on the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment from public hearings and written comments, as well as input provided by the joint Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Advisory Panels and the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team. Based on these comments, the Council and Policy Board agreed that recreational sector separation and recreational data collection should be addressed separately. Further development of the amendment will focus on management options for recreational sector separation, including mode management, as well as consideration of for-hire permitting and reporting requirements.

The Council and Policy Board separated out the recreational data collection and use issue from the amendment due to concerns that the complexity of this issue would cause significant delays in the amendment timeline. Council and Policy Board members also noted there is a need to more clearly define the objectives for recreational data collection improvement. This issue will be explored through a white paper which will consider the feasibility of various approaches and help the Council and Policy Board clarify goals for a potential future action. Additional information and updates are available on the [Council](#) and [Commission](#) action pages.



American Lobster Board Releases Draft Addendum XXXII for Public Comment: Draft Addendum Considers Repealing Gauge and Escape Vent Measures

The Commission's American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXXII for public comment. Responding to economic concerns from the lobster industry, the Draft Addendum considers repealing all Addendum XXVII measures pertaining to gauge and escape vent size limits. Concurrently, the Gulf of Maine states will work closely with industry to identify alternative conservation strategies and will report back to the Board at upcoming quarterly meetings.

Under Addendum XXVII, changes to the current gauge and escape vent sizes in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 1 (Gulf of Maine), 3 (federal offshore waters), and Outer Cape Cod were triggered based on observed declines in recruit abundance indices, with the original implementation date of June 1, 2024. In August 2024, the Board delayed the implementation date so that the series of changes to gauge and vent sizes, starting with an increase to the minimum gauge size in LCMA 1, would begin July 1, 2025.

Addendum XXVII aimed to increase protection of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank spawning stock biomass through proactive conservation measures. While the overall stock condition is favorable according to the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment, persistent declines in the juvenile lobster population, and now in landings, remain a cause for concern. A new stock assessment is underway and will be completed this fall to provide updated information on the status of the resource.

Draft Addendum XXXII considers two options: full implementation of Addendum XXVII by July 1, 2025 or repealing all of its gauge and escape vent measures. The Draft Addendum does not consider changes to regulations prohibiting the issuance of 10% additional trap tags above the trap limit or allocation in LCMAs 1 and 3, nor to the v-notch possession definition provision of Addendum XXVII.

The public is encouraged to submit comments at any time during the addendum process. The Draft Addendum is available at <https://asmfc.org/actions/american-lobster-draft-addendum-xxxii/>. Public comment will be accepted until **11:59 PM (EDT) on April 25, 2025** and should be sent to Caitlin Starks, Senior FMP Coordinator, at 1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, Virginia 22201; or to comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Lobster Draft Addendum XXXII) or via the public comment form on the [American Lobster Draft Addendum XXXII Action Tracker webpage](#).

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

Other Pending Management Actions

Here are some other pending management actions up for consideration:

Horseshoe Crab Draft Addendum IX

- **Purpose:** The Draft Addendum considers adding an additional specifications tool that would allow for male-only harvest limits to be set for multiple years for the Delaware Bay area states (New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia). It responds to recommendations from the Horseshoe Crab Management Objectives Workshop held in July 2024. The workshop participants recommended the Board establish an interim solution to maintain male-only harvest while changes to the Adaptive Resource Management Framework are explored to better align the model with stakeholder values.
- **Status:** Public hearings were held in March with the public comment period extending to March 31. The Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board will review public comment and consider final action on the addendum.

Northern Shrimp Amendment 4

- **Purpose:** The Draft Amendment considers options for extending the specifications timeframe to allow for longer moratoria (i.e., 2-, 3-, or 5-year moratoria as opposed to setting a closed season annually). The Draft Amendment also considers adding recruitment and temperature triggers to the management toolbox that could signal when biological and/or environmental conditions are favorable to support stock rebuilding and a sustainable fishery. Finally, Draft Amendment 4 considers adding the specifications setting timeframe to measures subject to change through adaptive management by providing an option for the timeframe to be changed via an addendum rather than an amendment.
- **Status:** Public hearings were held in February with the public comment period extending to March 12. The Commission's Northern Shrimp Section will meet May 1 to review public comment and consider recommending to the Commission final approval of the Amendment in May.

Atlantic Striped Bass Draft Addendum III

- **Purpose:** The Draft Addendum would consider recreational and commercial management measures for 2026 to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. This action is intended to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by adjusting 2026 management measures to ensure the stock is on the necessary rebuilding trajectory. A range of reductions for the recreational and commercial fisheries will be considered. Recreational fishery reductions will consider season and size limits that account for regional differences, including no-harvest and no-targeting closures. Commercial fishery reductions will consider quota reductions. The Board intends to take final action no later than October 2025 with implementation in early 2026.
- **Status:** The Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board will meet on May 6 to review the Draft Addendum and consider its approval for public comment.

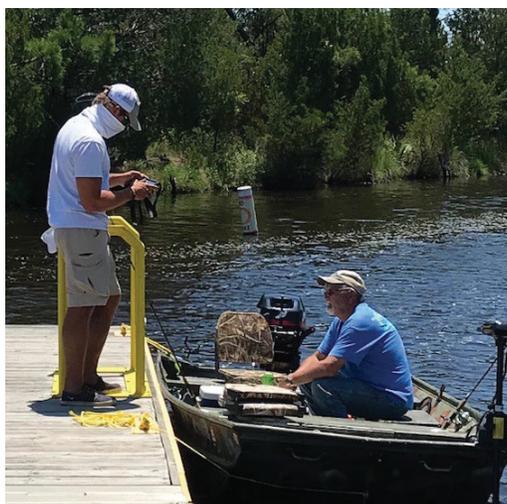
We invite you to visit the [Action Tracker page](#) on the Commission website to stay up-to-date on these activities and learn about upcoming proposed management actions.

ACCSP Electronic Data Collection Supports National Standardization of Recreational Fisheries Surveys

The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) is coordinated by Atlantic Coastal Co-operative Statistics Program (ACCSP) in Maine through Georgia, by GulfFIN from Florida through Mississippi, and by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Science and Technology (OST) in Hawaii. Historically, survey staff in each region used paper forms in the field that were mailed in, scanned, and then data checked. ACCSP transitioned from paper to electronic tablet data collection of the APAIS in 2019. ACCSP developed system was implemented by GulfFIN in 2021 and NOAA OST in 2023. The modernization to electronic data collection by APAIS staff nationally has cut data processing time by more than 75% with simultaneous improvements in data quality compared to paper forms.

Electronic survey conduct improves the speed of each survey, which allows for anglers to get back to their day and state staff to perform more interviews. Increasing the number of interviews leads to more catch information which improves Marine Recreational Fisheries Program (MRIP) estimates. Electronic data collection improves data quality by reducing the need to hand-fill, transcribe, and manually enter data. This

APAIS is a part of NOAA Fisheries' MRIP. APAIS is conducted by trained interviewers at public marine fishing access points. The survey records catch information, including the number of fish by species and length and weight measurements, from recreational anglers.



APAIS interview (c) NC DMF

also saves time, making partner processes more efficient. Additionally, tablets improve field monitoring and provide a greater level of quality control than was possible with paper forms.

ACCSP shared this technology with GulfFIN and NOAA OST, which has extended the benefits without additional costs for development in other regions, standardizing and improving survey conduct nationally. This increases the number and diversity of users that can provide feedback, which helps further improve the electronic APAIS application. The sharing of technologies highlights how important cross regional collaboration is for individual state partners and also for the MRIP, which is designed to provide estimates of recreational effort and catch data annually at the national level.

ACCSP, GulfFIN, and NOAA OST continue to collaborate with state partners to improve existing electronic tools for survey implementation while also looking for new tools such as electronic measuring devices for fish lengths and weights.

For more information, please contact Alex DiJohnson, ACCSP Recreational Team Lead at alex.dijohnson@accsp.org.

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. For further information please visit accsp.org.





COMMISSIONERS

PATRICK KELIHER

On March 14th, with his retirement from the Maine Department of Marine Resources (ME DMR), Pat Keliher stepped down as Maine's Administrative Commissioner, a position he held since 2011. During his 14 years with the Commission, he served as Chair of the Atlantic Herring Management Board (previously Section) and the American Lobster Management Board. Most notably, Pat served in a leadership role as Commission Chair (2019-2021) and Vice-Chair (2017-2019). Under his chairmanship, the Commission made important strides in furthering its strategic goals. Management accomplishments included quick action by the states to end overfishing and begin stock rebuilding for Atlantic striped bass; implementing ecological reference points to manage Atlantic menhaden; positive stock status for all four tautog populations after years of effort to rebuild the stocks; a new rebuilding amendment for bluefish; and the completion of benchmark stock assessments for American lobster, American shad, Atlantic cobia, and tautog.

Further, advances in habitat conservation were made by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) through its funding of 7 on-the-ground projects, which will open over 40 river miles and conserve over 300 acres of fish habitat. ACFHP also partnered with the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and The Nature Conservancy to spatially prioritize fish habitat conservation sites through GIS mapping and analyses for the Atlantic region of the US from Maine to Florida.

From a data collection and management perspective, the ACCSP also made progress under his leadership. The Program redesigned SAFIS eTRIPS, the first and currently only fisherman trip reporting application that meets One Stop Reporting initiative; and implemented state conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) For-Hire Survey and electronic data collection for MRIP's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey.

The majority of Pat's chairmanship occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time in which his leadership truly shined. He maintained active communication with staff and fellow Commissioners, oversaw a seamless transition to virtual meetings, and consistently made decisions with the safety of Commissioners and staff in mind. As past Chair, Pat also remained actively involved as part of the leadership team, providing guidance and oversight to the Commission's programs and procedures. Please join us in thanking Pat for his many years of service and wishing him a well-deserved retirement!



CARL WILSON

On April 8th, Maine's Senate officially confirmed the appointment of Carl Wilson as ME DMR's Commissioner. Carl first joined DMR in 1999 as the agency's lead lobster biologist. He has served since 2015 as Director of DMR's Bureau of Marine Science, leading a staff of 90 people in conducting DMR's overall fisheries research and monitoring efforts. In nominating Carl to the position, Maine Governor Janet Mills, stated, "I'm proud to nominate Carl to this vital leadership role for our state. His vast knowledge and experience in the science, policy, and economics of Maine's marine resource industries, combined with the strong relationships and mutual respect he has developed with Mainers who make a living on the water over his 26 years at DMR, will serve him well as the department's next leader." Pat Keliher added his support of Carl's section by stating, "I think Carl is an excellent choice to lead DMR. Over his years of exemplary service to the department, Carl's deep understanding of, and connection to, Maine's commercial fisheries has helped the Science Bureau adapt its programs to the impacts of a changing climate, incorporate industry's desire for participation in the science, and address the important need for better data to help manage and protect our dynamic marine environment."

With his appointment, Carl also became Maine's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Please join us in congratulating Carl on his appointment and welcoming him to the Commission!



STAFF

SAMARA NEHEMIAH

On March 3rd, Samara Nehemiah joined the Commission staff as its newest Stock Assessment Scientist. Samara recently completed her PhD from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, conducting stock assessment modeling research on Atlantic striped bass. She also studied spotted seatrout recruitment during her Master of Science research at the University of Florida's Cedar Key Biological Station.

In addition to contributing on the next Atlantic striped bass assessment, Samara will work on Atlantic croaker, tautog, horseshoe crab, and American eel assessments and Technical Committee analyses, in collaboration with counterparts in ACCSP and ISFMP. Please join us in welcoming Samara to the Commission!

Katie Drew & Simen Kaalstad Named Employees of the Quarter

Late last year and into the first quarter of this year, two staff members -- Katie Drew and Simen Kaalstad -- were recognized for their exceptional contributions to the Commission.

Katie Drew

Katie Drew, a 16-year veteran of the Commission and Stock Assessment Team Lead, was named Employee of the Quarter (EOQ) for the fourth quarter 2024 for her work in overseeing the Commission's Stock Assessment Team's efforts, including the completion of five stock assessments and providing additional assistance in conducting analyses when assessment committees did not have the expertise or time to complete the work.

Specifically, Katie and the relevant Technical Committees and Stock Assessment Subcommittees successfully completed a new and improved River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment, the 2024 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, and the 2024 Atlantic Sturgeon Assessment Update. For the latter assessment update, Katie skillfully navigated the Technical Committee through complex tagging data issues to allow for the timely delivery of the update to both the Management Board and to our federal partners for use in developing NOAA's new Biological Opinion.

In addition to her work on the 2024 Atlantic Striped Bass Stock Assessment Update, Katie contributed to Technical Committee work to address requests from the Board on release mortality and seasonal closures, as well as answer additional technical questions from Commissioners.

On the outreach front, Katie collaborated with scientists with Virginia Tech and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries on striped bass spatial modeling research, as well as the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science on a harvest control rule study.



Habitat Advisory Panel and East Coast Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Collaborative.

A persuasive communicator and team player, Simen was able to recruit several new committee members to implement ACFHP's new Strategic Plan and keep the Habitat Committee engaged and focused. He has also invited presenters to share the latest habitat conservation and restoration techniques and maintained close contact with committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.



On the national front, Simen helped organize the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) symposia at the American Fisheries Society annual meeting and at the Restore America's Estuaries annual conference. He also presented at the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Conference and served as liaison to the National Fish Habitat Partnership Board's Governance Committee. Additionally, he keeps the new NFHP restoration tracking database up-to-date with ACFHP projects and maintains compliance with relevant Congressional legislation, such as the American Conservation Enhancement Act.

Simen showed ingenuity in designing a new seagrass monitoring and restoration initiative for ACFHP's Science & Data Work Group; improved and modernized the annual ACFHP request for proposals submission and evaluation process with an online format; and hosted an applicants' Q&A webinar, generating an increased number of proposals submitted for FY26.

With his multi-faceted combination of networking and communication skills, creativity in problem solving, and a value-added understanding of coastal habitats, Simen was a clear EOQ choice.

As the EOQ recipients, Katie and Simen received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in their personal record. In addition, their names are on the EOQ plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Katie and Simen!

Katie's strong work ethic, and keen analytical and problem-solving skills have made her an indispensable asset to the Commission's assessment and management efforts and, more broadly, to the advancement of fisheries science along the entire East Coast.

Simen Kaalstad

In recognition of his dedication and outstanding work in completing several high-profile Commission projects, Simen Kaalstad, Director of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) and ASMFC Habitat Committee Coordinator received the EOQ for the first quarter of 2025.

In his two years with the Commission, Simen led a broad range of committees and work groups under the ACFHP and Habitat Program portfolios and contributed to external partnerships like the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's