



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfc.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Horseshoe Crab Management Board
FROM: Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel
DATE: April 21, 2025
SUBJECT: Advisory Panel Report

A Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel (AP) meeting was held on Thursday, April 10 from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to review Draft Addendum IX to the Horseshoe Crab FMP as well as public comments submitted and provide input to inform the Management Board's decisions on the management action.

AP Attendance

Brett Hoffmeister, Chair (MA)
Nora Blair (SC)
Allen Burgenson (MD)
Christina Lecker (VA)

David Meservey (MA)
Matthew Sarver (DE)
Benjie Swan (NJ)
George Topping (MD)

Draft Addendum IX is specific to the Delaware Bay region horseshoe crab bait fishery. It considers allowing the Board to set specifications for male-only harvest for multiple years. It also considers options for managing male-only harvest limits, seasonal harvest restrictions, and when to apply harvest caps for Maryland and Virginia. The AP's discussion is summarized below and is separated by issue in the Draft Addendum.

Section 3.1: Multi-year specifications

Consensus on a preferred option was not met; the majority of advisors supported Option 1A, which would continue to require specifications to be set annually using the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework. Rationales for supporting this option were provided, including a desire for a transparent process every year where data are reviewed, and a harvest limit is set based on the most up to date outputs of the ARM. They also commented that the ARM Framework as implemented has been working based on the significant increases to the population of horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay region since 2013, and therefore they do not see a change to the process as necessary. One advisor was concerned that if multi-year specifications were allowed, it would become the new norm and the data and surveys for the ARM could be perceived as less important and possibly terminated. It was also noted that the Board can still opt to implement male-only harvest under status quo.

One advisor supported Option 1B, citing the need to give the ARM Subcommittee time to focus on improvements to the ARM, which would likely take years to accomplish. They also noted that the reward and utility functions of the ARM are not completely objective and exploring modifications to these functions is important for stakeholder buy-in to the ARM Framework. This advisor also supported sub-option 1B-2 but stated that a 4:1 male to female ratio would be a more appropriate point below which to start reducing the male harvest limit due to the long

M25-33

generation time for horseshoe crabs. Some members supporting Option 1A also stated they could live with Option B, and would prefer Sub-option 1B-1.

Section 3.2: Seasonal Restrictions

Consensus on a preferred option for the season closure was not met; however, the advisors did not express strong support or opposition for either option. Several did not have a preference. Several advisors supported Option 2A because it would provide more of an opportunity for harvesters. George Topping stated this is a non-issue. The current regulations in Maryland only allow for 25 horseshoe crabs to be harvested as bycatch per day, or 150 crabs per day for permit holders, before May 1.

One advisor supported Option 2B because that reflects the intention of the Board at the time of Addendum VII's development. They also stated that depending on the significance of the harvest between May 1 and June 8, they could be willing to reconsider support for Option 2A.

Section 3.3: Harvest Cap Policy for MD and VA

The AP discussed this section of the draft addendum briefly and a few advisors supported Option 3B as a way to clarify the current policy. One advisor said status quo is working fine. Others abstained from providing input on this topic.