

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

**The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting**

May 6, 2025

Approved August 6, 2025

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INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of February 4, 2025** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the Stock Assessment Subcommittee nominations for striped bass as modified today** (Page 6). Motion by Jason McNamee; second by Pat Geer. Motion passes by consent (Page 6).
4. **Move to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment for Atlantic Striped Bass** (Page 6). Motion by Nichola Meserve; second by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by consent (Page 6).
5. **Move to remove the entire section 3.3 Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding from the document** (Page 21). Motion by John Clark; second by Joe Cimino. Motion fails for lack of majority (Page 27).
6. **Move to remove Option 4 from Section 3.3 (0.8% commercial reductions)** (Page 27). Motion by Chris Batsavage; second by John Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 28).
7. **Move to remove all the split separate equal mode reduction options** (Page 28). Motion by Nichola Meserve; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 28).
8. **Move to remove the ocean size limit options of 37" to 40" and 38" to 41"** (Page 29). Motion by Dr. McNamee; second by Marty Gary. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 29).
9. **Main Motion**
Move to add the Maryland baseline season option to Draft Addendum III (Page 42). Motion by Dave Sikorski; second by John Clark. Motion Amended.

Motion to Amend
Motion to amend to add contingent upon final review by the TC and SAS of the modifications that were made (Page 43). Motion by Doug Grout; second by Ray Kane. Motion passes (Page 45).

Main Motion as Amended
Move to add the Maryland baseline season option to Draft Addendum III contingent upon final review by the TC and SAS of the modifications that were made. Motion passes (Page 45).
10. **Move to task the PDT with developing a sub-option for the MD season option that would add an uncertainty buffer** (Page 46). Motion by Nichola Meserve; second by Cheri Patterson. Motion passes (Page 47).
11. **Move to remove the entire Section 3.2 Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of sale vs. Point of Harvest from the document** (Page 47). Motion by Dr. McNamee; second by Nichola Meserve. Motion Fails (Page 49).
12. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 49).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for C. Wilson (AA)	Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Rep. Allison Hepler, ME (LA)	Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)
Cheri Patterson, NH (AA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Raymond Kane, MA (GA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Sarah Ferrara, MA, proxy for Rep. Armini (LA)	Robert Brown, MD, proxy for R. Dize (GA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Pat Geer, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Matt Gates, CT, proxy for J. Davis (AA)	Rep. Brian Turner, NC (LA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Ronald Owens, PRFC
Craig Miner, CT proxy for Rep. Gresko, CT (LA)	Daniel Ryan, DC, proxy for Rese Cloyd
Marty Gary, NY (AA)	Lowell Whitney, US FWS
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Max Appelman, NMFS
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)	

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

Ex-Officio Members

Tyler Grabowski, Technical Committee Chair	Eleanor Bochenek, Advisory Panel Chair
Mike Celestino, Stk. Assmnt. Subcommittee Chair	Lt. Jeff Mercer, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.

Staff

Bob Beal	Caitlin Starks	Jeff Kipp
Toni Kerns	Tracy Bauer	Samara Nehemiah
Tina Berger	James Boyle	Jainita Patel
Madeline Musante	Chelsea Tuohy	
Emilie Franke	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, May 6, 2025, and was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Chair Megan Ware.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR MEGAN WARE: Good afternoon, everyone, we are calling to order the Striped Bass Board. If all Board members could take their seats that would be great.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR WARE: We're going to start with approving the agenda today. Are there any modifications or additions to today's agenda? Seeing no hands; the agenda is approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR WARE: Next is approval of proceedings from our February, 2025 meeting. Are there any edits to those proceedings? Seeing no hands; those are approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR WARE: Next, we're moving to Public Comment. This is for items not on the agenda. I know we've had some requests to comment on the Maryland Season Proposal.

My plan is to take that under the Addendum III discussion, so if you are here to make a comment on that don't worry, I've written down a note, we will get to that under a future agenda item. But for any other comments that are on items not on the agenda, please raise your hand. Good, I am not seeing any in the room or online.

We will move on to Agenda Item 4, which is our 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment Terms of Reference and Subcommittee Membership. Katie is going to give a presentation. This is an

action item, we'll be doing two motions, one to consider the terms of reference and one to approve the Stock Assessment Subcommittee, so I will pass it to Katie.

UPDATE ON 2027 BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

DR. KATIE DREW: Jumping right in. The Striped Bass will be going through the NRCC Peer Review Process in March of 2027. We are looking to get some Terms of Reference set up to provide guidance to the TC and the SAS on important issues to address through the assessment, and to the Peer Review Panel as well, to help them evaluate if the assessment passes or fails if it is suitable for management use.

The needle we're trying to thread here is being specific enough to provide useful guidance to the Technical Committee and to the Peer Review Panel, without being so specific that we sort of lock ourselves in to something that we cannot achieve, as we go through this process.

We've tried to develop these terms of reference to provide guidance to us that is specific, but not too constraining. I'm just going to walk through the Terms of Reference for your consideration, and hopefully get them approved. TOR #1 is new for this assessment.

REVIEW AND CONSIDER STOCK ASSESSMENT TERMS OF REFERENCE

DR. KATIE DREW: Basically, we borrowed this from the NRCC's standard terms of reference, because we thought it was useful and important for striped bass as well, which is to identify relevant ecosystem influences on the stock, including characterizing the uncertainty in sort of the relevant sources of data and the uncertainty about their link to stock dynamics.

Then consider those findings as appropriate in addressing other TORs and how the findings of this TOR are considered under other TORs in the rest of the assessment. Just trying to formalize our approach to looking at things that are affecting

recruitment, other stock dynamics and ecosystem influences, environmental factors, et cetera, which is something that the staff would do anyway, but this is just putting it down on paper that this is something we want to pursue and document within the assessment.

TOR #2 has to do with our fishery independent and fisheries dependent datasets. We're basically just planning to investigate all sources of fisheries independent and dependent datasets, so including life history, indices of abundance, tagging data, et cetera. We want to make sure that we are describing the spatial and temporal distribution of these data, and characterizing the uncertainty, as well as for the strength and weaknesses of these datasets, and making sure that we justify the inclusion or elimination of any datasets from the assessment.

TOR #3 is about total catch. We will estimate commercial and recreational landings and discards, characterizing the uncertainty in the data and the spatial distributions of the fisheries. We plan to review the new MRIP estimates of catch effort and the calibration methods, if available. I think right now the current timeline is they will be released some time in 2026, which will give us time to include those new estimates in the assessment.

However, obviously if release of that calibrated data is delayed, we may have to reconsider whether we can include that or not. But for right now, if available, we will include it in the assessment. TOR #4 is for our aged-based method, our statistical catch at age model. Basically, using this approach as distinct from the tagging model, which is in the next TOR, to estimate the annual fishing mortality recruitment, total abundance, stock biomass for the time series and estimate uncertainty.

We are tasked to provide model diagnostics, retrospective analyses, and a historical retrospective, which is basically just looking at what does this benchmark time series look like

compared to previous benchmark time series? Again, we are going to be looking to try to provide estimates of exploitation by stock component and sex where possible, and for the total stock complex.

If multiple models have been considered, we want to make sure that we are comparing the results in the performance and justifying the choice of the final preferred model. TOR #5, the tagging model. We will use tagging data to estimate mortality in abundance, as well as provide suggestions for further development of this model.

We want to continue moving forward with the tagging model and the analysis of the tagging data, and try to maybe take another step either with this benchmark or with the next benchmark, in terms of including our use of the tagging data. TOR #6 is reference points, so we will update or redefine our biological reference points, that is the point estimates is a proxy that we're using for BMSY, SSBmsy, Fmsy, et cetera. We will try to define stock status based on these reference points by stock component, again where possible.

We do intent to try a more spatial or multi-stock model throughout this assessment process, but we are leaving ourself a little bit of room if that does not pan out the way we would like. That applies to both the reference points and then the modeling itself. TOR #7 for projections. We would like to explore new methods to predict future catch for F.

I think as we'll be discussing later today, we do struggle with our ability to predict what catch and what effort will be like in the future, as well as what the impactful management changes are on catch and effort into the future. We would like to develop better methods to predict those going forward.

Then we will provide annual projections of catch and biomass under these different scenarios, using these improved estimates of future catch or F. Reporting the annual probabilities of exceeding the threshold BRPs for F, and the probabilities of falling below the threshold BRPs for biomass.

TOR #8 is for minority reports. We do not anticipate a minority report being filed. We obviously strive for consensus in all of our TC and SAS discussions. However, should one arise, it is always good to be prepared, and so this is included as sort of a default TOR that if a minority report had been filed, this is what we should do, which is basically make sure that the majority lays out their reason against this minority report, and the minority report needs to make sure that it includes their reasons against adopting the approach suggested by the minority.

This will also allow the Peer Review Panel to evaluate this minority report and these various arguments. TOR #9 is, of course, our research recommendations, so basically reviewing and evaluating the progress we've made on previous research recommendations, and identifying new research recommendations, as well as recommend the timing and the frequency of future assessment updates and the next benchmark assessment.

That covers it for the TORs. Because we are going through the NRCC process, we do not need a separate set of peer review panel TORs, which we do if we are going through SEDAR or the ASMFC process, so this is just a single set. I'm happy to take questions on this if the Board has any.

CHAIR WARE: Great, thanks, Katie, let's combine questions and comments on the reference points, so any questions or comments? Roy Miller.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: A question, Katie. In the past, doing assessment updates, we've considered the familiar topic of exploring producer area specific estimates, the Delaware, the Hudson, in addition to the Chesapeake. Our practice has been for a long time, to lump Delaware and the Hudson in with the coastal. What do you see as the future of this particular assessment, in regard to that particular topic?

DR. DREW: I think we definitely are interested in trying a more spatial and stock specific model, and that we'll definitely try that. I think the question of what do we do with Delaware is still kind of an open question. In the past, you are correct, we lumped it in with the Hudson River stock.

I think this time around we are going to reevaluate that question, and it's basically, do we have the data to pull Delaware out as a separate stock itself, and if not, should it be with the Chesapeake Bay, or should it be with the Hudson River stock? I think recent tagging data and genetic data has suggested there is a lot more mixing with the Bay than maybe we had previously realized.

If there is not enough data to model the Delaware Bay separately, we would consider, I think, lumping it in with the Chesapeake Bay, as opposed to with the Hudson River. But I think that is something that we will address through the stock component model, and basically try to find the best representation of the stock that works with the available data that we have.

CHAIR WARE: Next, I have Jason McNamee.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Thanks, Katie, but coming in, my question was kind of similar to Roy's. I just wanted to make sure you guys had space to sort of try the spatial model again, so maybe I'll modify my question a little bit. You guys had built kind of a spatial model last time, but is there any thought?

You know the other potential thing you could think about is like a state's-based approach, so WHAM can do now spatial. I was wondering if that is what you were thinking about, or if you were kind of still thinking about the existing spatial model that you guys had developed?

DR. DREW: Great question. I think the SAS and the TC will definitely be kicking off this discussion in more depth as a larger group a little bit into the future. But I would say, some initial discussions that we have is there is definitely interest in pursuing something like WHAM or stock synthesis, that does allow for some spatial considerations within that

specific modeling framework, which would also have the benefit of moving us away from this very specialized model that has less flexibility for development and new features down the road.

I think that is one path we're planning to take. Chesapeake Biological Lab has actually developed a separate spatial model based on kind of what Gary Nelson had done initially, and taking that, bringing in some additional use of the tagging data, making some modifications to that, that we think has a lot of potential. Conveniently, we have hired the grad student who did that model for her PhD as our new stock assessment scientist, which we'll be making that formal announcement later, perhaps during the SAS nomination section.

We have somebody to lead kind of the development of this more spatial model that is still in that statistical catch at age framework. In parallel with maybe exploring something like WHAM or an alternative approach. I think we have a couple of good options on the table for moving this issue forward, and we'll just have to see how it plays out through the benchmark assessment.

CHAIR WARE: Next is Mike Luisi.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: Dr. Drew, Term of Reference #6 talks about the biological reference points. Something that has come up in discussions at home has to do with, or have you guys been thinking about reference points as they relate to production?

If we continue to have the production that we've had over the past half a decade, is there some thought to maybe playing that out into the future a bit longer, to determine whether or not the reference points would be adjusted to account for reproduction, not so much failure, but just poor reproduction that we've seen recently. Is that something that is in the plans?

DR. DREW: Yes, I mean definitely we will be updating the current reference points with the poor recruitment we've seen recently, to kind of have a better sense of what that would look like into the future. I think there is also the, would something like an SPR reference point be feasible this time around?

Obviously, the discussion point we've always had was, you know the 1995 reference point was chosen as the threshold, and we've aligned our F reference point to achieve that under specific recruitment conditions. The other option would be to try to pick an F reference point, and then align our SSB reference points with that F reference point under specific recruitment conditions.

Whether we do that through an SPR model, or whether we do that through a more of an empirical approach, either option is on the table that I think the TC and the SAS will discuss. If the Board would like to provide more input on reference points or objectives of these reference points going forward, we would definitely be open to that.

I think during the last assessment we did ask for that and the Board did not have really firm guidance on that, but if the Board has rethought that and would like to provide additional guidance, I mean we could take that here, or we can have a separate discussion on that issue.

CHAIR WARE: Joe Cimino.

MR. JOE CIMINO: You had mentioned that comments are appropriate now too. I'm just curious what we're thinking. If there is a potential that the recalibration that is delayed and timing. Is it really worth, and Katie, not necessarily a question to you, to all of us. But is it really worth going ahead of that, or waiting, especially if we know that it is in some reasonable timeframe that we will see it, but there is a delay? I think that kind of may be suggesting right now that the review process may be delayed on their part with the loss of staffing.

DR. DREW: Right, I think there are two components, which is one, we're on the SAW/SARC

schedule, so we are sort of at their mercy. But that also means that we can't really bump this six month to keep it to accommodate a delay in the MRIP calibration, so we can't postpone. We might get postponed by them, unless we wanted to take this completely off of the SAW/SARC schedule and do your own external peer review, which we have not budgeted for. However, I would say there is the potential to imitate the current research track/management track approach, so that I think it's worthwhile getting this peer reviewed to get these significant changes and improvements in model development. Then we can do an update immediately following that to include the calibrated data, and potentially another year of data, since the terminal year of this will be 2025. I think it's too early now to know whether that March 2027 deadline will happen or not. But I think we're going to go forward with it as planned, but we'll have maybe a backup option if the calibrated data are not ready in time.

MR. CIMINO: Quick follow up. I didn't address that, Katie, but I should have, because that was a great answer, so thank you.

CHAIR WARE: John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thank you for the update, Dr. Drew. Just curious on the projections, is there, this may not be the place for it, but just wondering if socioeconomic factors will be worked in, something to the akin of what has been done with like black sea bass and flounder, you know for the recreation demand. If it's looking like, well we're going to really lower F, that could lead to these set of regulations. How is that going to affect recreational response? I mean obviously we're with a very restrictive recreational regime right now.

DR. DREW: We didn't explicitly mention it in this TOR, because I don't think we want to lock ourselves in to anything, but we are interested in pursuing something like that recreational

demand model. I think we'll have to evaluate how much socioeconomic data will be available to us during this process, but it is definitely something we would like to look into, and incorporate, if possible, into this TOR.

CHAIR WARE: Those were all the hands I had for questions/comments, just checking around, great. I think Katie has one more slide on the Stock Assessment Subcommittee membership. We'll have here do that and then we'll do both motions.

REVIEW AND POPULATE STOCK ASSESSMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

DR. DREW: This is the SAS nominations. There are actually two additional nominations to this list since what you saw in materials. Number one is the addition of Nicole Lengyel Costa from Rhode Island, and number two is the addition of Samara Nehemiah, who is the new stock assessment person for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, who developed that spatial model for striped bass, with Dr. Mike Wilberg at the Chesapeake Biological Lab and will not be able to leave that behind.

Instead, will work with us on this assessment to try to bring that into management use. These are the current SAS nominations; you'll recognize a lot of these names from the last go round. It's a great list of people, and we're looking forward to working together.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks, Katie, and welcome Samara, we're excited to have you. Any questions or comments on the nomination list? Yes, Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: First, I appreciate you guys adding Nicole into the list. The only reason Nicole wasn't in the list originally is an oversight by me. I appreciate the consideration in adding her here. I have a motion when you're ready to approve this, so I'll park it there and you can come back to me when you're ready.

CHAIR WARE: Great, any other questions or comments? Seeing none; I think we can go to your motion. Thank you.

DR. McNAMEE: I will **move to approve the Stock Assessment Subcommittee nominations for striped bass as modified today.**

CHAIR WARE: We have a motion by Jason McNamee; is there a second? Pat Geer. Any discussion on the motion? Any opposition to the motion? **Motion passes by unanimous consent.** I think that is a really strong group, so excited to see what they can produce. I think we have one more motion under this agenda item, for the Terms of Reference, if anyone is interested in making that motion. Nichola.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: **I would move to approve the Terms of Reference for the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment for Atlantic Striped Bass.**

CHAIR WARE: Great, a motion by Nichola Meserve, we have a second from Jason McNamee. Any discussion on the motion? **Any opposition to the motion? Excellent, passes by unanimous consent.** All right, we are cruising on to Addendum III, where I think we'll spend a majority of our meeting tonight. This has got a lot of parts to it, and we're going to take it piece by piece.

We're going to have a few presentations. We have first Katie is going to present on the stock assessment projections. We'll take a few questions on that, and then Emily is going to present on the PDT analysis. Then we're going to, I think pause there for the presentations, and start with the discussion on the level of reduction, and how the Board wants to move forward with that part of the Addendum.

Once we solve that, I will probably go to Maryland for their presentation and the discussion on the seasonal baselines. We'll pause, figure that out, and then we'll see where we're at. This is potentially an action item. We could be approving the Addendum for public comment today, we'll see how things shake out there, but we'll start with Katie and the projections.

DR. DREW: I'm just going to go over kind of our base-case projections and the resulting reductions to achieve a 50% and a 60% probability of rebuilding. Then I'm going to cover the Board sensitivity runs that were requested, but that was specifically not intended to develop options around.

For the base case, this is based on preliminary 2024 removals, so that includes the 2024 preliminary MRIP estimates plus a 7 % reduction in commercial harvest and discards, based on those Addendum II quotas. The previous projections that the Board reviewed last year were based on estimating the total 2024 recreational removals from those partial waves. We did not have the complete preliminary data, instead we were predicting what total 2024 removals would be, based on the removals that we had from Waves 2 through, eventually, Wave 5.

Just to show you kind of where that ended up shaking out. The preliminary 2024 MRIP estimates for the whole year were within the range of estimates predicted from the partial wave data. You can see the little yellow squares, and that final year was from just Waves 2 and 3, and the total year estimate, it's not final yet, these numbers are not final yet. I believe the 2024 numbers were released this morning, but we've not had a chance to actually look at those.

But the preliminary 2024 estimates were sort of below that 2 to 3 Wave and above the other waves. We're right in the range of what we were predicting and showing you guys for the other projections. For the base case for recruitment, we are drawing from the 2008 to 2023 model estimates of Age 1 recruitment.

This is our low recruitment regime based on a change-point analysis, so we know recent recruitment in this time period is lower than we've seen in the past, and lower than the overall time series mean. For F in 2025, F is projected to increase 17% in 2025 and then decrease in 2026, as the above average 2018-year class enters that ocean slot, and then starts to move out of it. We are predicting based on previous year classes and changes in F that we've seen, that F in 2025 will

increase about 17% from where it is in 2024, but only for one year and then come down again. For 2026 to 2029, we think the most likely outcome would be that F would be about what it is in 2024.

We don't see any other strong year classes coming up behind that 2018-year class that would cause a jump in F, so over the next few years we expect it to stay about at F2024. We calculated an F rebuild 50%, where we calculate what F for 2026 to 2029 is necessary to result in a 50% probability that SSB in 2029 will be at or above the target, and then we calculated an F rebuild of 60%, which is the F in 2026 to 2029 that will get you to a 60% probability that SSB in 2029 will be at or above the SSB target.

Kind of comparing these F rate scenarios to the historical time series of F that we've seen from the assessment. You can see sort of the black line with the gray confidence intervals is what has historically been estimated from the stock assessment. That little diamond is where we predict F in 2025 will be, and then it is going to come down a bit to these various colored scenarios on the screen.

F in 2024 is estimated based on the preliminary landings to be about 0.123. The F 50% rebuild is almost identical to where we expect to be in 2024, of about 0.122, and then the F to have a 60% probability of rebuilding would be about 0.114. When we project this forward, you can see those confidence intervals on the F are overlapping pretty much pretty well.

They are all very low compared to the historical time series of F that we've seen in previous assessments. This is just to give you some context about the F that we are looking at for these different scenarios. The final results, the scenario that the TC considered the most likely, that is we expect F from 2026 to 2029 to be about where it is in F in 2024, has a probability of 49% to be rebuilding by 2029, equivalent to about 3.5 million fish.

The reduction in 2026 removals necessary to achieve that 50% probability of rebuilding, about 1% to achieve a 60% probability of rebuilding and left 7%. Some people asked about kind of like what does 50% versus 60% mean when we're talking about rebuilding, you know is just like, oh it's just a coin flip that you'll be above or below it. I wanted to preset this graph of what we think the distribution of spawning stock biomass will be in 2029. That gray distribution is the SSB that has a 50% probability of rebuilding versus the orange distribution is a 60% probability of rebuilding. That black vertical line is our SSB target, and that dotted vertical line is the SSB threshold. What you can see is, both of these will be very close to the target.

Some of the runs will be below it, some of the runs will be above it. In the 50% scenario, about half the runs will be below the target, and about half the runs will be above the target. In the 60% scenario, you can see it's just shifted a little towards those higher SSBs. Slightly more of the runs will be above that SSB target.

I think what I also want to point out though is that the probability, or like the number of runs that are below the threshold is minimal. Similarly, the number of runs that are well above the target are also minimal. These distributions are just; it's not a uniform distribution of either you're from 0 to the target or from the target to infinity.

These distributions are really centered around the target, it's just that the 60% has a few more runs above the target than the 50% probability does. But both of them have a minimal probability of being below that threshold. This is kind of what the uncertainty around that terminal year or that 2029 SSB looks like relative to the reference points.

You can see there is a lot of overlap between the 50% and the 60% probability. The TC and the SAS had some comments on these that I wanted to relate to you, basically pointing out that I think the major source of uncertainty for these projections is, how much F will or will not increase in 2025, and what F will be from 2026 to 2029.

These factors depend on a lot of things like angler behavior, fish availability, the weather conditions, et cetera, and it's difficult to predict going forward. The base-case scenario that we have presented we think is the most likely, and it does include uncertainty around that F rate. But if there is sort of a consistent trend, either increasing or decreasing in F, that is not captured by these projections.

There is a significant jump or a significant decline in F that we have not modeled that will be captured by these projections. The TC also wanted to reiterate their previous comments about the effectiveness of reductions less than 10%. First of all, it's difficult to measure for the recreational fishery a 10% of less reduction, just given the uncertainty in the MRIP estimates.

The effectiveness of these small reductions on paper for the recreational fishery would really be overwhelmed by the uncertainty in the calculations themselves, including uncertainty around fish availability and effort and angler behavior into the future, and how those would intercept with things like changes to the season.

A shorter season going down maybe one inch on a slot, et cetera, the effectiveness of those reductions on paper is really uncertain when they are so small. That covers the content that was in the initial memo. These were the projections that we used to develop the options that were part of the document. I'm now going to go over some of the separate projections sensitivity request that the Board made at the previous meeting. The specific requests were number one, to extend the base run projections past 2035, 2029 is our rebuilding deadline, but most of the very recent poor year classes that we have seen will not have made it into the SSB at that point.

The request was to number one, extend that base run projection to 2035, to get more of a sense of the impact of those low recruitments. Then to use the most recent six years of very low recruitment instead of that low recruitment

regime 2008 to 2023 values. They also requested that we project a moderate F value for 2026 onward, which is higher than kind of that projected F in 2024, but lower than the F target.

I think this came out of the fact that previous projections that we showed to the Board indicated that the population was sort of stabilized between the SSB target and the SSB threshold if we continue to fish at F target. I think there was some interest in seeing if we open up a little bit compared to where we are in 2024, but not all the way to the target. What does that look like for these projections?

I'm going to describe the various scenarios, now that we went into, so for our recruitment scenarios I've plotted here, this is the time series of recruitment from the stock assessment that we draw from to project recruitment. The bars in blue are model estimated, the bars in orange, we have predicted those based on the Maryland JAI. The Maryland JAI is pretty well correlated with the model estimates of recruitment coming out of the stock assessment model.

The stock assessment terminal year is 2023, so in order to develop estimates of recruitment for '24 and '25, we used the Maryland abundance indices from '23 and '24, and sort of the relationship between that and the model estimated recruitment that we've seen in the past to sort of get an idea of what we think recruitment would likely be, based on that index.

For 2008 to 2023, medium recruitment is about 116 million Age 1 fish. You can still see that is lower than the median of that previous high recruitment regime, but not as low as the median of the 2019 to 2025 recruitment, which is about 86 million Age 1 fish, and that 2019 to 2025 values that are drawn is a combination of the model estimated, as well as sort of this predicted from the index approach.

For the F scenarios, I am providing sort of a distribution of the F that we used in these projections. The distribution in gray is the distribution of F from F2024, which is what we used in the base case. The moderate F is that blue

distribution, which is between where the center of that distribution is sort of between the F2024 and the target, so slightly higher than the F2024.

It's not as high as 2025, because the TC feels it's still most likely that we will see a drop from '25 to '26 onward, but higher than what the base case drops to. That gives us sort of a combination of four different runs here, all going out to 2035, where we have our base case of low recruitment and the F of 0.123.

The F of 0.123 combined with the very low recruitment scenario, then the sort of low recruitment combined with the moderate F of 0.134, and then the very low recruitment combined with a moderate F of 0.134. These are the results. This version does have the confidence intervals on, moderate F of 0.134. These are the results. This version does have the confidence intervals on, I'm going to take them off in a minute, but I just wanted to emphasize, number one, that uncertainty increases the further out you go. Number two, these trends are overlapping a lot, but not all of the confidence intervals fully overlap each other.

If we take some of that off to be able to see the trends more clearly, you can see that the base-run scenario, one, so you can see that we're going to be at the target in 2029, according to that base-run scenario, and then under the current low F, and even under the current moderate F, SSB will continue to increase after that.

However, in the very low recruitment scenarios, that increasing trend will be reversed, and we'll start to see SSB decline. Basically, to kind of summarize that in words as opposed to a picture. SSB continues to increase after 2029, if we're using the 2008 to 2023 recruitment assumption. Under the 0.123 and 0.134, it will start to increase previous projections again, so that you sort of stabilize at a lower level below the target if you actually increase the F target.

But under that very low recruitment, SSB will start to decline under both F scenarios as that 2018- and 2015-year class basically continue to die off due to natural mortality and fishing mortality, and are replaced by those weaker year classes behind them. With that I am happy to take any questions from the Board.

CHAIR WARE: Great, thank you, Katie and the TC for this great work. We'll do a few questions now for Katie. These are questions that are critical to folks being able to discuss the level of reduction today, we've got a lot to get through, so any critical questions for Katie. Okay, we will be moving on to the PDT presentation for Emilie. Actually, just let me check the webinar. Okay, great, we will move on to Emilie's presentation.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF DRAFT ADDENDUM III ON FUTURE MANAGEMENT MEASURES, COMMERCIAL TAGGING AND TOTAL LENGTH MEASUREMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

MS. EMILIE FRANKE: I will be presenting the Draft Addendum III that was included in your materials. As you may have noticed, there is a lot of information in there, so I am going to try to be as concise as possible. But I also want to make sure that the Board understands what kind of content is in the Addendum, because the seasonal closures, you know that is a new management tool the Board is considering.

There was a lot of additional background information that Plan Development Team wanted to include in the document. I'll just give a brief, sort of background/timeline, get into very brief background sections, and then we'll focus most of the presentation on the management options in the Draft Addendum, and the Board is considering today approving the Draft Addendum for public comment.

Then of course the Board can always make any modifications to the Draft Addendum that it sees fit. First, I just want to thank the PDT members for all the work on this. We had a great team, and then also obviously a lot of input from the TC and SAS

from the Law Enforcement Committee, and the Advisory Panel as well. On the screen is the Board motion from December.

I think it's a good summary of sort of where we started to support striped bass rebuilding, considering the 2024 removals, which Katie presented on, while balancing socioeconomic impacts. Options should include a range of reductions, considering recreational versus commercial contributions to those reductions, season and size changes, taking into account regional variability. Looking at no harvest and no target closures, and the Board specified that final action shall be taken by the annual meeting this year in October, for measures to be implemented in time for the 2026 fisheries.

Then in February, at our last meeting, the Board did provide some additional guidance. The Board noted there should be options for both a 50% and 60% probability of rebuilding. The Board specified the options should focus on size and/or season changes for the recreational fishery, not any changes to bag limits. There should be options for a recreational mode split. The Board gave some additional detail on the types of closures and size limits to look at.

Then the Board added two additional issues to the Addendum, one on commercial tagging, and the other on the definition of measuring total length for striped bass. Then in addition to this, as the Chair noted, the Board will also consider today whether to add the Maryland recreational season to the Draft Addendum as well.

Just a timeline. After the Board provided that guidance in February, the PDT developed the Draft Addendum. Today the Board is considering approval for public comment. If that happened, we would have a public comment period in June, and then the Board could select final measures in August. Again, as noted in the motion, the Board noted that this could be pushed a meeting cycle, so perhaps

approving it in August., and then selecting final measures in October.

Just sort of the statement of the problem. The stock is subject to a rebuilding plan to be at or above the biomass target by 2029, Katie just went over the projections estimating an increase in fishing mortality this year, followed by a decrease next year, as that 2018-year class moves through the ocean slot limit.

The Board also noted a concern about the lack of strong year classes coming behind the 2018s, so the Draft Addendum considers options for commercial and recreational measures in 2026 to achieve a reduction, to increase that probability of rebuilding a stock. On the second issue, that is the commercial tagging issue.

State's currently with commercial fisheries can choose to tag at the point of harvest, or the point of sale. This has been implemented since 2012. The Board noted some concerns that waiting to tag until point of sale could increase the risk of illegal harvest. The Draft Addendum does consider requiring tagging at the point of harvest, with the goal of improving enforcement.

This change would impact three states who currently tag at the point of sale, that would be Massachusetts, Rhode Island and North Carolina. PDT did want to note that all the state commercial fisheries are managed differently, and so this makes it a little bit difficult to determine whether requiring point of harvest tagging would actually decrease illegal harvest in every state.

Finally, the third issue, total length. The FMP has always specified size limits and total length, but does not define how to measure total length. Current state regulations do vary on that definition, and there is concern that without a standard coastwide definition, this could undermine the conservation, consistency and enforceability of the current size limits, especially the current narrow slot limits. The Draft Addendum does consider a coastwide definition, with some required elements

for each state to implement to define total length, and that would be for both sectors.

Just an outline of sort of the first part of the document. We have introduction, which I just went over, and the statement of the problem. Then we have several background sections. Again, the PDT thought it was important to include some additional background, more so than we have in past Addenda, to really provide the Board and the public with context when considering seasonal closures.

I am just going to briefly, one slide per section, just to give the Board an idea of what information is in the document. Katie went over the projections, so I am not going to go over status of the stock. But for status of management, of course Addendum II was implemented last year in 2024. Commercial took a 7% quota reduction, in the ocean the measures are one-fish at a 28–31-inch slot, maintaining the same seasons as 2022.

In the Chesapeake Bay a slot limit was implemented, it's one-fish at 19 to 24 inches, maintaining the 2022 seasons, and that Addendum also included some requirements around filleting, and also around Board action in response to stock assessments. In the document there is some pretty detailed information on the commercial and recreational fisheries.

But just as sort of a quick overview, this figure shows striped bass fishery removals through 2024 for recreational, with those preliminary MRIP estimates. We don't have commercial estimates yet for 2024, so you can see that red line. Those are commercial removals, goes until 2023.

You can see on the commercial side landings have been relatively stable, you know as of course managed by the quota, with some reductions in landings over the past decade, as we've had a couple of quota reductions on the

commercial side. Then you can see that arrow for the preliminary 2024 MRIP estimates.

The 2024 recreational removals, so harvest and release mortality were about a 35 percent decrease from the 2023 levels. You can see 2023 was below that spike that we saw in 2022, when those 2015s were coming through the ocean fishery. Then also now on the screen you can see these are striped bass directed trips from MRIP.

You can see the ocean in blue on the top, and the Chesapeake Bay in orange on the bottom. You can see in the ocean for directed trips, you see that spike again in 2022, and there has been a decrease since then through 2024. There are a lot of factors that influence recreational catch and effort.

But of course, in 2024, the teen year class has been growing out of that 28-to-31-inch slot that could have contributed to that decrease that we're seeing in 2024, both on the catch side and on the effort side. Then for the Chesapeake Bay, on the bottom you can see it has been a little bit more of a slight decline over the past decade, in terms of effort, and with a little bit steeper decline in effort in 2024. Again, a lot of factors, but the management changes in 2024 with a slot limit in the Bay, the reduction in the bag limit for the Maryland for-hire sector, as well as just a lack of strong year classes in the Bay probably contributed to that decline in 2024. The next section in the background of the Draft Addendum is on the seasonality of the recreational fishery.

In thinking about seasonal closures, considering when the closure would occur and how that would impact removals, given that with the striped bass migration throughout the year, each of these fisheries is occurring at a different time. This is a table from the document, you can see sort of going from top to bottom, each column you go from Wave 1, January, down to Wave 6, end of December.

Then going across from north to south you have each state, this is just for the ocean. This is showing effort, so the proportion of each state's striped bass

directed trips by wave is sort of a heat map. In red, that indicates waves with higher effort, green indicates waves with lower effort. You can see in New England, of course you have a lot of the fishery occurring in Wave 4 in the summer.

You sort of move to Rhode Island and Connecticut. You start to see more effort into Waves 2 and 3. New York, New Jersey, you also see, and Delaware you see that effort in Waves 2 and 3 as well, but you also start to see then another peak in Wave 6. Then same, you go down the coast to Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and the ocean, very low effort and catch in those three states in the ocean. But you do see sort of a small peak in Wave 6 as well.

There is a lot of figures and state-specific information in the document, looking at the seasonality of each state's fishery. The Addendum also has a section on social and economic considerations. Just a couple highlights from that section. Of course, commercial quota reductions would likely reduce profits, but the impacts, the magnitude of those impacts will vary, depending on individual harvester circumstances, for example, their ability to diversify to other fisheries.

Any changes to the recreational measures may result in anglers, of course, changing their trips, maybe shifting target species, or deciding not to fish at all. It is really difficult to predict angler response, especially to seasonal closures. Some recent research indicates that for those anglers that prefer to keep a fish, anglers do prefer to keep a larger fish.

Just noting that the current narrow slot limit may reduce effort for those that are seeking to harvest a fish. There is a higher slot option being considered in this Draft Addendum, which I'll get to, a 37 to 40 inches, for example, in the ocean. That would allow keeping a larger fish, but of course there is some concern, because

that would be pretty much inaccessible for anglers fishing from shore.

Then sort of overall, any reduction in effort could negatively impact the regional economy, and businesses related to the striped bass fishery. Again, impacts on individual businesses depend on several factors, including their ability to switch to other species. Managers have to weigh these potential negative economic impacts with any potential long-term impact on the stock of any new measures. The next section in the Draft Addendum is about equity, in terms of regional closures. In the ocean the Draft Addendum considers grouping things together into two regions, and each region would have a different closure. There are two approaches, basically the question in the Addendum is where do we put Rhode Island, which region is Rhode Island in? The first option is you have New England, Maine through Massachusetts, and then Mid-Atlantic, Rhode Island through North Carolina.

You know there is really no perfect answer here. Maine through Massachusetts have similar fisheries, Rhode Island and Connecticut have slightly different timing than sort of the rest of the coast. You will see the options try to address that with considering for the Mid-Atlantic doing a closure in two waves in the Mid-Atlantic to try to address some of those differences.

But one important thing to note here, that the Law Enforcement Committee supports this regional configuration of grouping Rhode Island with the Mid-Atlantic, to make sure that all states around Block Island Sound would have the same season. There is some concern if Rhode Island had a different season than Connecticut and New York.

That sort of leads me to our second regional option, where Rhode Island would be grouped with New England, again, sort of similar points there, just with the Law Enforcement concern about Rhode Island having a different season than the other Mid-Atlantic states. The Board did request that the PDT talk about separating Delaware through North Carolina as its own region.

The PDT did explore that, did calculate options for that, but ultimately decided not to put it in the document. Delaware through North Carolina, ocean harvest, ocean catch is very low, very low effort. It is also pretty sporadic, so there is very limited MRIP data with high PSEs. The PDT felt it was more appropriate to combine it with the rest of the Mid-Atlantic, and consider some closures to cover two different waves, to try to address some of the differences there.

For the Chesapeake Bay, you know Maryland and Virginia both have peak removals at the end of the year. The fishery is a little bit different in both states, and that is one of the reasons is Maryland and Virginia already have very different seasons, also different from PRFC and D.C., so that is a challenge for the Chesapeake Bay.

Another analysis included in the Addendum is on what other species are commonly caught on the same trips where striped bass is caught, and also, commonly targeted on trips that also target striped bass. One possible result of any seasonal closure is anglers might target other species, so this might provide some insight into what other species might be available when a striped bass closure occurs.

However, some of these species that show up in the analysis may only show up because anglers are already targeting striped bass. For example, is an angler only targeting bluefish because they are already targeting striped bass. Anglers may not necessarily switch the species you see in this analysis, they may decide not to fish at all, as I mentioned earlier.

But this may help provide some context on what species folks are catching and fishing for along with striped bass. Then finally, to wrap up the background, there is some information on current seasonal closures for striped bass that are implemented in Maryland, Chesapeake Bay and North Carolina, Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River. Again, this provides some

insight into angler behavior, changes in effort, but again, there are a lot of factors to think about there. I'm going to get into the proposed options now. As I mentioned, there are three issues being considered here. Then the Board today is going to consider a fourth issue on the Maryland Season.

I'll first get into Section 3.1, and that is measuring total length. The striped bass FMP, as I mentioned, has not defined total lengths. Some states in their regulatory definition require that anglers squeeze the tail to measure total length. Some states allow for angler discretion to decide whether or not to squeeze the tail, some states require the tail to be left natural or to fan it out.

This would result in different total length measurements, depending on what you're doing with the tail. Some recent analysis by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries found that there is a pretty minor difference in the total length, when you have a natural tail versus squeezing a tail.

But there is a more substantial difference when you're comparing a natural tail to a tail that is forcibly fanned out. For example, a fish up to 32.38 inches could actually measure at 31 inches if you are forcibly fanning out that tail. This could allow harvest of striped bass over the maximum size limit, which would undermine the conservation intent of the slot limit.

The Law Enforcement Committee does support a consistent and easy to understand definition of total length, and also the Advisory Panel was in consensus in support of a standard coastwide definition of total length. The PDT did ask the Advisory Panel for their input on whether some of the requirements for total length were reasonable, especially for shore anglers.

For example, requiring shore anglers to lay a fish flat to measure it. The Advisory Panel felt that it is every angler's responsibility to have a plan for how they are going to measure the fish, and they would support including those required elements for total length. The PDT does note that even with a

standard definition there still could be some inconsistencies, for example, fillet a rack may measure differently than a whole fish, even if you're using the same measurement method, so just a note there.

On the next slide, you'll see the options. Status quo, the FMP does not have a definition of total length. The alternative Option B would have mandatory elements for a state to include in their definition of total length. Again, this would be for both sectors. States would have to require that you squeeze the tail, you take a straight-line measurement, the fish is laid flat, and the mouth is closed.

There is some suggested language in the document that states would use, or states could submit alternative language. For example, there are some states that have similar language already in place, so they could submit that in their implementation plan. All right, so I am going to move on to the next section of commercial tagging, Section 3.2.

As I mentioned, states can currently choose whether to tag at point of sale or point of harvest. Massachusetts, Rhode Island and North Carolina currently tag at the point of sale. As I mentioned, the Board had some concerns about waiting to tag until point of sale, which could increase the risk of illegal harvest. But each state's commercial management system and their current tagging programs are very different, so it is difficult to determine whether point of harvest would actually decrease that risk in every state. The PDT did note it is important to understand what the current consequences are if unused commercial tags are not returned.

All states with commercial fisheries noted that essentially, it is more difficult for the harvester or the dealer to get their tags for next year if they haven't returned unused tags, or they receive a reduced number of tags until they can provide some record of tag accounting. The

Law Enforcement Committee provided a lot of input on this topic.

The majority opinion of the LEC supports tagging at the point of harvest to improve enforcement, from the total time a striped bass is in possession. This would reduce the ability to high-grade and also increase accountability. There was an opposing opinion within the Law Enforcement Committee that supports continuation of the point-of-sale tagging.

There were some concerns about the prospective harvesters trading tags if they had to switch to a point of harvest system, and sort of this question of, would tag trading potentially increase illegal market fish, if you were required to switch from point of sale to point of harvest. They also noted the administrative burden of distributing tags, especially for states that don't have ITQs.

The options in this section, status quo, states can continue to choose whether to tag at point of harvest or point of sale. The alternative Option B would require that all states with a commercial fishery tag at the point of harvest. One note here is that implementation of this alternative Option B may need to be delayed until 2027 or 2028, because it would require some significant administrative changes for those states who would have to make the switch.

Then one point for Board discussion today that was noted in the document and in the memo is, is it the Board's intent to allow tagging at the point of landing or just the point of harvest. The FMP doesn't define point of harvest. In various state regulations it said something like, you know tagging immediately upon possession or a state's regulations may outline specific parameters, like before you leave the fishing ground.

There is one state that currently does specify tagging at point of landing, which requires tagging before you come to shore. Just something for the Board to think about for these options. I'm going to get into our final, but biggest issue, and that is Section 3.3, the reduction in fishery removals.

As Katie discussed for the base case projection or our status quo, we have a 49% probability of rebuilding by 2029. The alternative in this Draft Addendum is considering a 7% reduction to increase that probability of rebuilding to 60%. Again, as Katie mentioned, the TC has noted that any management change less than 10% is difficult to measure.

Just for completeness, in the PDT memo there was an outline of options for a 10% reduction. Is that something the Board is interested in? The PDT is not advocating either way, just wanted to include that for completeness, given the TCs guidance. We're focused here in the Draft Addendum document itself on this alternative of 7% reduction. Status quo would be Option 1, no reduction. Addendum II measures and implementation plans remain in place, and then Options 2 through 4 consider a 7% reduction with various contributions by each sector to that reduction. Option 2 would be even reductions, so recreational takes a 7% cut, commercial takes a 7% cut.

Option 3 would be no commercial reduction, so commercial would take a 0% cut, and recreational would take an 8% cut, so just slightly higher to offset commercial not taking a cut. Then Option 4 is similar, this is reductions based on sector contribution to total removals. Since the commercial fishery only contributes about 10 or 11% to total removals, they only take a very small portion of that 7% reduction, so commercial would take a less than 1% cut, and recreational would take an 8% cut.

That is the framework we're working with. Just wanted to go over a couple of items before I actually get into the option tables. Of course, on the commercial side we're considering commercial quota reductions, the recreational side we're considering changes to size and/or seasons. Just a reminder from an FMP perspective.

Since the stock is overfished, no conservation equivalency for non-quota managed fisheries is

allowed, except for the Hudson River, Delaware River and Delaware Bay. Actually, further the Draft Addendum specified that the New York Hudson River fishery, that Pennsylvania/Delaware River spring slot fishery and the Delaware River and Bay summer slot fisheries, could in their implementation plan submit specific measures for those areas to achieve their reduction if they didn't want to go with the coastwide measures.

Just as a reminder, these three fisheries in New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware, these fisheries typically occur just over a couple months, targeting smaller fish to protect spawning females and/or due to the availability of smaller resident fish. Then as I mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, season closures would be a new management tool for the Board, implementing on a coastwide basis.

There are a lot of things to consider here. First, you know the tradeoff of when to implement the closure for each region. Take a shorter closure during peak fishing season or a longer closure during the slower part of the season. Next is thinking about what type of closure, a no harvest closure or a no targeting closure.

As we saw in December, there are two different assumptions for how anglers would respond to a no targeting closure. The first is we assume that all trips that previously targeted striped bass would still happen. Those folks would still go fishing, but they would shift target species. Another assumption is that we assume that all trips that previously targeted only striped bass would actually no longer occur.

That trip wouldn't happen, or they would switch to a target species that didn't interact with striped bass at all. There are two different assumptions there for no targeting. Then something else to think about for season closure is, you know weekends versus weekdays. The season closure analysis combines data across all days. In our analysis we are not distinguishing between a weekday or a weekend, we're just looking at the number of days. If we did add weekend versus weekday to the analysis, the FMP would have to be

very specific to say what day of the week a closure would start, because we would have to know how many days are weekend, how many days are weekday. The TC did recommend doing a case study to explore what if we did take the catch data and separate it into weekend and weekdays.

What would the impact be? We did one, staff did one case study looking at an 18-day closure if we separated weekend and weekdays. What if you started the closure on a Monday, what if you started on a Friday? What if we did like we usually do and actually not separate those days? Essentially, there was a less than 1% difference between the different methods.

It seems like the difference would be relatively small between the methods, but the closure would have to be long enough to make sure you're encompassing multiple weekend and multiple weekdays. Then a couple things for the Board to think about in the PDT memo. As I mentioned, there is a lot to think about with season closures.

First of all, should the Addendum include options for closures less than 14 days? There are some options that are calculated to meet the 7% reduction in less than 14 days, but the TC has previously said that any closures less than 14 days are unlikely to be effective, because folks could just more easily shift their effort, and because we have that assumption of sort of an average between having several weekdays and multiple weekends.

Should the Addendum include a 14-day minimum, or should we include options less than 14 days? Then for North Carolina, North Carolina only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during Waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal stock. Should North Carolina only implement a closure during Wave 1 or 6, even if that means different dates than their neighboring states? Something for the Board to consider there.

Then there is another question, this is specific to New York for Wave 2 or Wave 6. New York is currently only open for harvest 16 out of the 61 days in Wave 2, and 45 out of 61 days in Wave 6. If the Mid-Atlantic Region implemented a closure when New York is already closed, then you're getting a little bit less savings than was calculated.

If the region implements a closure and agrees on dates when New York is already open, you're getting slightly more savings than you calculated, but you're having a larger impact on the New York fishery, and a greater percent of New York's Wave 2 fishery would be impacted. Basically, your question to the Board is, how would this work for New York if there was a Wave 2 or Wave 6 closure? Then a couple things to think about, in terms of recreational mode splits.

If you recall, we asked for Board member input after the February meeting via e-mail, so the PDT used that input to develop options. Some of the input specified sort of two ways to think about a mode split. First, what we're calling the for-hire exemption, where you're looking at all recreational modes combined.

You have a wider slot limit for for-hire, but then everyone is taking a slightly longer closure to account for that wider spot. You have a different size limit between modes, but you have the same season for all modes, or you could look at it via separate mode reductions or separate equal reductions by mode, so you just calculate for-hire, separately, calculate private and shore separately. If for-hire wanted a wider slot they would take a longer closure, but private and shore wouldn't have to take that longer closure.

In this case, you get different size limits and different seasons by mode, and I wanted to note that the Law Enforcement Committee noted that it's particularly difficult to enforce different seasons by mode, because you have to identify which sector a vessel belongs to that would be out there fishing.

One thing from the PDT memo on mode splits, one Board member asked to consider instead of a

consecutive closure for for-hire to consider days off per week. The PDT did discuss this, but noted a concern on uncertain how we would quantify that reduction. Also noted some potential through unequal impacts.

For example, a part-time charter business could shift their trips around the day off during the week, but a full-time charter business can't really make that shift, so the full-time captains might experience greater impact. However, days off per week could sort of have a more even impact over time, because you're scanning multiple waves, so you kind of have these days off spanning several months, which could be sort of more even than just doing one finite time period.

All right, so now that we've made it through sort of the Board questions to think about. I am going to get into the Option Tables. There are a lot of options in the Addendum, so I'm just going to sort of give a high-level summary, and I'm happy to answer questions. But again, we have this framework of sort of four options. We're thinking about a 7% reduction with different ways to split the reduction up between sectors.

We're going to start with commercial quotas. Again, commercial quotas could either take no reduction, a 7% reduction or a slightly less than 1% reduction a 0.8% reduction. The Addendum lists all of those quotas in the same table, so you can compare what that would look like for each state. Depending on the reduction on the commercial side, we move to the recreational side.

For Option 2, if the commercial sector takes a 7% reduction, then the recreational sector will also take a 7% reduction. For the ocean there are a couple different ways to achieve that 7% reduction. You could just change the size limit, so the size limit could be a 37-to-40-inch slot, same seasons, status quo seasons.

On the flip side you could keep a size limit the same, 20 to 31, and then take a 7% reduction via seasonal closure. Then we have all of these different mode-split options, so if we're looking at the for-hire exemption, you could widen the slot limit for the for-hire, and that would slightly increase removals, so all the modes would have to take a slightly longer closure, so an 8% reduction instead of a 7% reduction, or you could look at separating the modes completely.

Private and shore could keep the same size limit and just take a 7% seasonal closure. For-hire could widen their slot limit and then take a longer closure to offset that wider slot limit. Same format for the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake Bay, because it currently has a five-inch slot, there is a little bit more wiggle room for different size limit options in the Bay. The ocean is very limited. For the Bay you could narrow the slot to 20 to 24. You could move to a 22-inch minimum size, or you could take the entire reduction via seasonal closures. That is for all modes, and then we get into the various mode split options, where for-hire could either widen the slot limit, and the private and shore could reduce the slot limit slightly.

For-hire could move to a minimum size, and private shore could slightly reduce the slot limit. There are a couple different combinations here for considering a wider slot limit for the for-hire. Next is a very similar set of tables, but now we're moving on to Options 3 and 4, where we assume the commercial sector takes no reduction, or a less than 1% reduction. All this does is essentially slightly increase the reduction the recreational sector has to take. You're just taking slightly longer seasonal closures than you saw in the last table.

Again, I'm happy to go through this in more detail if folks would like at the end here, but it's the same setup with various options for all modes, and then options for mode split. Same for the Chesapeake Bay. Same setup here. We have a couple options for all modes to take an 8% reduction, or you split things up private and shore and for-hire.

Then finally, in the option tables, of course you know it says, take a 7% reduction via seasonal closure. Then you have to go to these various tables to figure out, when am I going to take a closure, and how long would it have to be to beat that reduction? There are several tables in the document that show how many days you have to close to meet the reduction.

I'm just going to show one example here, if we're looking at how long does a closure have to be for all modes with a 7% reduction. Just to give you an idea of what the tables look like, so the first row for the ocean, if we're looking at a 7% reduction for all modes. If the entire coast closed at the same time, there is an option here for a no-targeting closure.

All states could close for nine days in Wave 3, and nine days in Wave 6. That is a dual wave closure. Then for Maine and Mass, Maine through Massachusetts, you have several options for each wave. Same for the Mid-Atlantic, and you can see the Mid-Atlantic has those options for closing during two waves.

For example, Wave 2 and Wave 3, no targeting closures, you're closed for 12 days in Wave 2 and 12 days in Wave 3. Again, this is to address the fact that these Mid-Atlantic states have slightly different timing of their fisheries, so closing during two waves ensures that sort of at least one of those closures has an impact on each state.

Same type of table for the other regional breakdown, where you have Rhode Island grouped with New England. Same thing here. Again, I'm happy to go into more detail if folks need. Then for the Chesapeake Bay, you have options for Maryland and options for Virginia. PRFC and D.C. can choose to implement their closure during the same wave as Maryland, or the same wave as Virginia, so they have the option there.

The Addendum notes that Bay jurisdictions should try to align their seasons as much as

possible. The seasons are vastly different at the moment, so the Bay jurisdictions should try to align the seasons as possible, and the Bay jurisdiction should also think about whether new closures can be added on to existing closures. If you have a no-harvest closure in a wave, would you want to keep a consistent no-harvest closure, instead of switching to no targeting. That was it, thanks for bearing with me there on all the options, and I will stop there and take any questions.

CHAIR WARE: We've got a lot to get through today, so we'll start with, are there any questions? I would just ask, if you have a question or a comment on specific PDT question that the PDT had for the Board, I'm going to ask you to parking lot that until we get to that specific item. This would be more overarching questions we'll go through item by item here, but Doug Grout, we'll start with you.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: I'm going to start with what I hope will be a very simple question, with some of the options on the seasonal closures. For example, up in Maine through Massachusetts, if we had to take like a 9% or 10%, there are waves, that we could close a whole wave and it doesn't achieve our goal.

If we were to choose that option, say to close Wave 5, would the Technical Committee and PDT be able to give us, how many more days would we have to close, say in Wave 4 to get the complete reduction? You could do that once we decided on an option.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, so right now I think the options just assume you would just close that whole wave and just be short of the reduction, but we could add a statement saying, like trying to combine. Like if you close all of Wave 5, how many days would you need to get to the full 7% reduction. We could just make sure we add a statement saying that the Board could do that, but yes, we can calculate that.

MR. GROUT: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: All right, online we have Steve Train. A question, Steve?

MR. STEPHEN R. TRAIN: I'm not sure who to direct this to, it may be Law Enforcement. But in Section 3.2, Option B, this said that the Law Enforcement Committee was afraid there could be trading tags if they were tagged at the point of sale instead of the point of harvest, or the other way around, I can't even remember now.

I just wondered, how would that be possible? Aren't the tags registered to a fisherman, and if they were trading tags at the point of sale, wouldn't the wrong guy be selling them? I mean you wouldn't get the money. I just don't understand the fear, that's all.

MR. JEFF MERCER: Yes, this is Jeff Mercer from Law Enforcement Committee. I guess the concern about that, we can use Rhode Island as a specific example of that. Currently there are about 1,100 fishermen who are licensed to commercially fish. Only about 25% of those actually participate in the fishery.

There was some worry that the amount of tags that would have to be distributed could end up with people who normally don't participate in the fishery, or even unlicensed commercial fishermen having those tags in their possession and the fish could be sold in the black market and be indistinguishable from legally taken fish.

CHAIR WARE: Steve, are you okay?

MR. TRAIN: I think so, I just don't know how sale on the black market would be prevented either way, but okay, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Nichola Meserve.

MS. MESERVE: I have a question, it actually goes back to the projections, so I apologize for not getting my hand up earlier to ask it. But I've been trying to compare what we have before us today for projections with those that we were looking at in December, when we were last speaking about a reduction.

A number of the projections and the percent reduction associated with them there is no contrast what we saw in December and what we're looking at now. For example, you know there was the 50% probability now is a 1% reduction and projections that we were looking at in December were either 0% or 8% reduction, depending on the assumptions that were being made.

One of the projections that was again done this time, was using that low, low recruitment assumption, and that called for a 10% reduction to get 50% probability of rebuilding. I was wondering if the comparable percent reduction is available now for that projection with the low, low recruitment assumption to get to a 50% probability.

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DR. DREW: The TC did not have a chance to review that or look at that, but I think we ran that afterwards at your request and it was about 4% reduction would be needed to get to the 60% probability of rebuilding, I'm sorry, the 50% probability of rebuilding under the low, low recruitment.

Currently, under the low, low recruitment scenario you have about a 44% chance of rebuilding by 2029. To get to a 50% probability, you would need a 4% reduction in removals. I also just want to point out for when we're comparing the old projection tables, those were assuming we would take a reduction in 2025. We would have to come down from what we thought would be a much higher level of catch to get to that 2025 level.

Now these reductions since 2025 is, whatever is happening is happening. Instead, we're assuming these reductions will be implemented in 2026, which we are projecting to be a lower level of catch, so you need sort of a harder to compare like a 10% reduction from 2025 versus a 4% reduction from what we're projecting for 2026, in terms of the percentages don't always line up exactly, but to get to a 50% probability of rebuilding under the low,

low recruitment scenario, you would need a 4% reduction in 2026.

MS. MESERVE: Thank you for that, as a follow up that may be asking too much, but does the 7% reduction that we're contemplating in this document now, does that change the trajectory of the projections that show declining SSB sometime after 2029, or does the low recruitment that we've experienced. You know that is going to cause a downturn regardless of a 1% or a 7% reduction.

DR. DREW: If we looked at that, I don't know if we want to look at the figure again, if that's maybe too much going on. But basically, the two scenarios for F that we looked at was about 0.12, which was the 2024 value and the 0.13. The 60% value would be a 0.11 reduction, so it would be a 0.11 F value.

It would probably, so the two F values for the pink line and the orange line are both higher, slightly higher, like we're not talking huge F differences. Would it completely stop or reverse that trend? I don't know exactly, it is hard to say from here. It would not accelerate the trend for sure, if we were on that.

But on the other hand, I think we get back to then the TCs recommendation or comment that, would implementing a 7% reduction through these options actually do anything in reality. That is a harder thing to say. I think for the projections we could say, you know you would slow that downward turn. How much is hard to say without doing those projections. But achieving that 7% in reality is different than achieving it on paper.

CHAIR WARE: All right, we're going to go online to Craig Pugh, that is the last hand I had for questions, and then we're going to move into discussion.

MR. CRAIG D. PUGH: Back to Steve's comment or question. I can help a little bit with some of this; we tag a lot of striped bass. The tags can

be purchased and have been in other states and other instances. It doesn't matter whether it's a weigh station tag, it doesn't matter whether it's a fish tag. You can specify what color you want and you can specify what digits you want on it, and you can specify what letters you want on it.

Yes, Steve, you are correct in assuming that that would be hard to help stop the black market in that instance. Poundage sold is the true adjudicated way of making this work is poundage sold, and not necessarily the tags. They have their importance as far as the digit on it that you can track back to a certain source, but it's not the be all end all. It is a help, and it does work.

CHAIR WARE: We're going to move on to Board discussion. Again, we're going to take this piece by piece here. We're going to start with our discussion on the level of reduction. I think the questions for the Board today are, would the Board like to maintain or remove that topic from the Addendum, and if we want to keep in a level of reduction, what percentage? If anyone is looking to kick us off in that discussion with a comment or a motion, that would be great. Doug Grout.

MR. GROUT: I'll try and start the discussion. Seeing now that if we stayed status quo, we're going to be assuming that we're going to have with recruitment occasional strong year classes. If we assume that, we really don't have to have a management action right now. One of the things that has struck me and worried me quite a bit is the fact that we've gone six straight years with very low recruitment. The last time we had this low recruitment consecutively for six years was back before we rebuilt the stock. We had very low spawning stock biomass. Right now, we have a reasonably high spawning stock biomass, and we're still not getting the recruitment. I have the same concerns that Nichola had. Maybe we shouldn't, now that we've had six straight years of poor recruitment that maybe we should be using the very low recruitment scenario in our projections. Not to make more work for you folks.

An easy way to do this is just to say, okay, we want to go to a 60% probability that would technically

cover that scenario where we stay with a very low recruitment pattern. The problem is, we can say, okay, we can rebuild to this level. But if we have very low recruitment, it's only a temporary thing.

We're going to go back into an overfished status, and if we are to move forward with management measures that include seasonal closures, potentially lower quotas or maybe changes in size limit. Assuming that we're going to have a 7% or 10% reduction in catch, we have to make our constituents aware, very strongly, that we can do this. But we may end up overfished again a year or two later.

That is where I'm kind of at odds right now. I would like to be able to do something that would give us a higher probability, but it's going to turn. It is more than likely, unless we get a good strong year class, going to put us right back in the same situation we're at. What are our responsibilities if we have a stock that can't be rebuilt to that target anymore, or brought back up to that target?

Should we be looking at this, trying to maintain it above an overfished standpoint? Right now, if we were to go with, say we want to have a 60% probability of rebuilding, I would like to ask that somewhere in this document there be something that makes it very clear that under a very low recruitment pattern we're not going to be there very long, if at all.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you, Doug, for kicking us off. Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: To Doug's point. Doug, I share a lot of your concerns, all of your concerns, honestly. I thought I would give the Board my perspective on how I think we could best serve the stock over time. I think that is about the question I asked earlier dealing with biological reference points. If we continue to have low recruitment, as we have for the past six years, it becomes kind of a new reality.

I don't believe that we can maintain the level of spawning stock at the current reference points. It won't be possible to maintain it at that level. We hope that we're going to see some good recruitment in the next few years, I mean that is always the hope. But I was thinking more along the lines of addressing the continued low recruitment through the benchmark process in considering reference points, so that if it has become our new reality that we're not setting ourselves up for failure each and every time we get a new assessment.

If we maintain the reference points that we have we'll be overfished. I don't think that is something that we should strive for either. My hope was that we would work on that next step after the next step, after the benchmark assessment. I'll stop there.

CHAIR WARE: Is there discussion from the Board on this? In the absence of a motion, right now in the Addendum we have an option for a 7% reduction. If that is not what you want, this is the time to be making a motion. John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: If we're going to be talking motions at this point, is that what you want? I certainly understand the concerns here, but I fully agree with what Mike just said about the reference points, and the fact that even with 7% reduction, as everything we've heard we can't even measure that. I would actually want to move to put off taking further reductions at this point, if the Board would consider that until the benchmark assessment is completed. That would be the motion that I would make.

CHAIR WARE: I think staff has some language that will appear, and if you could read that in that would be great.

MR. CLARK: I'm sure it's better than what I just said, sure. **Move to remove the entire Section 3.3 Reduction in Fishery Removals to Support Stock Rebuilding from the document.**

CHAIR WARE: We have a motion from John Clark, is there a second? Joe Cimino. Any additional rationale, John?

MR. CLARK: Well, I think one of the concerns I have is that we're trying to manage a fishery on the recreational side we're down to a three-inch size limit. How much more restrictive can we get? We've talked about these closed seasons, that is going to make things more difficult. For example, the socioeconomic section of the document said, anglers will choose not to go fishing as one of the possibilities.

You know it is very difficult when the North American model of fisheries conservation depends on people fishing. I think we've got concerns here, we're sometimes looking at this in the abstract as like, well if we just reduce the fishing pressure this much more, the stock will start to recover. But in the meantime, you have millions of people making millions of decisions as to what they're going to do.

If we keep making the experience more and more difficult, it is just going to turn off a whole generation to fishing for striped bass, which is a huge driver of recreational fishing in most of our states. I just think we're at a point where we've got a very restrictive management regime right now, and it is enough, until we can take a look at what's happening with the stock with the next benchmark.

CHAIR WARE: Joe Cimino, I'll go to you as seconder, any rationale?

MR. CIMINO: Yes, thank you, Madame Chair. I have serious concerns for this stock. I think everyone around this table does. I also have concerns shared with a lot of what John said. I think that we are in the marathon not the sprint. I think that the TC and Plan Development Team have been very clear that what we're talking about here is not something that is completely measurable, but it has significant impact, socioeconomic impacts on

the folks fishing. I think I would much prefer to pause right now and see what comes out of the next assessment, and make decisions based on, you know as Doug was mentioning. If we have to assume that recruitment isn't going to be what it was, as Mike Luisi was saying, you know if capacity for this fishery isn't what it was, then we need to be talking about new reference points. Maybe much smaller fisheries, I don't mean that doesn't mean reduction, but I think we need to take some time with it.

CHAIR WARE: Any discussion on the motion? Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I just wanted to thank the PDT and the TC for the extensive amount of work that they've put into this part of the document, particularly. I listened in to a lot of those discussions and was just really impressed by the amount of consideration that they gave to everything. But I do agree with the comments that have been made.

I think we are in a different position looking at these projections than we were in the last meeting. All of them are below that 10% kind of threshold that the Technical Committee has been stressing to us. We have succeeded, in a sense, in getting to a very low fishing mortality for this stock, and it is indicative to some degree that the measures are working for now.

There are benefits to stability in the measures from the socioeconomic points that have been raised, as well as compliance for the assessment. I think that those outweigh the uncertain and potentially short-lived benefit that we would get from changing the measures at this time. Thanks.

CHAIR WARE: I have Jason McNamee and then Dennis Abbott.

DR. McNAMEE: I'll also complement, this was a ton of work, really thorough, really great work, like lots of slicing and dicing of the different options. I really appreciated that. I'll maybe offer. I'm not sure where I'm at on this now, based on the

conversation. I'll just offer a couple of quick thoughts. I think when you have a stock that is not doing well, it becomes really important to protect the remaining spawning stock biomass.

You know if you're getting into a period of low productivity, you need to have the spawning engine in place for if and when conditions do eventually improve. Like I'm a little uncomfortable, you know in that regard. Almost so compelled, the logic that people are using around the table so far is sound. I understand people's sentiment.

I guess then, just to offer a counter thought though, 7%, 10%, you know those aren't particularly different from each other either. If we were to move forward with the 7%, I don't know that that is that much different than 10% would be. I think kind of moving forward with something could still be justified.

But then I guess my final thought I'll offer is, I'm compelled by this notion of we can do something. It's not going to be measurable, I agree with all of that. That leaves me to wonder, you know is the public sentiment for us to do something, which we would get from putting the document out with this part in it. I'm still kind of like, waffling around a little bit, but I wanted to offer a few kinds of counterpoints to what we've heard so far.
CHAIR WARE: Dennis Abbott and then Matt Gates.

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: Where to start. Well, thank you for all the work that was done. It was an enormous amount of work that Emilie and company put together. At the last meeting I accused the Board of kicking the can down the road and not willing to take action. But in conversations I was reminded of all the action we've taken over the years.

All those actions have led us to having a 28-to-31-inch slot limit along the coast. How much more can we squeeze that? Well, we just can't really. No matter what we do, we don't get any

real results. I think we've got to realize that we're attempting to do the impossible. We've heard talk about low recruitment we can't handle. We can't do anything about that so on and so forth.

Jumping to the no targeting and the seasonal closures, I think that turns off most everybody involved in striped bass fishing. We've got the unenforceability of all those things. We talk about minimum impact. It is confusing. The angling public would not understand us having no targeting and closures and fish now, fish later, so on and so forth.

The public wants us to do something, but they are asking us at some point to do what is becoming the impossible. The economics is another big factor. Some of the things that would be proposed would just cause divisions within the Board and amongst the states. I go along wholeheartedly now with John Clark's motion, and I'll support that myself.

CHAIR WARE: Matt Gates, and then I have Doug.

MR. MATTHEW GATES: Thanks, John, for putting this motion out there for discussion. I think this is healthy for the Board to do. I'm not in favor of taking out Section 3.3 at this time, largely due to I think that we've heard a lot from the public about wanting to be conservative with striped bass. I don't think you know 49% probability of rebuilding at the very end of the rebuilding period is what they had in mind.

I think they are going to want to comment on rebuilding, and maybe taking reductions when we go out to public hearings. I think it would be kind of an awkward public hearing to go out and talk about striped bass management now, without this in it. I think taking this out now, I agree with having the discussion about reference points going forward, but I'm not really willing to stop doing management in the meantime. I think we're still a few years out from getting that resolved, so I think we should keep going with what we've got.

CHAIR WARE: Doug and then I have Emerson online.

MR. GROUT: You've heard my comments before about my concern about going on. I would speak against this motion, for the main point of view is, this would be a great opportunity, one, to bring forward this concept that given under the current very low recruitment regime, the public needs to be aware that we may not be able to rebuild.

Also, that we may need in the future a technical scientific look at what is the real capability of the stock to rebuild to this particular level. We may be needing to look at different reference points, because of the fact that we're not getting good recruitment, any strong recruitment despite having a good level of spawning stock biomass. I also think there is a large amount of the public that would like us to bring out and actually see these options, provide comment on it. I would also use this opportunity to explain to them that we're in a different regime right now, and until we get a good strong year class, this is where we're headed right now.

Maybe waiting until then, until the stock assessment is a good thing. But I don't think we should be making that decision right now. The other point I'm going to make, if this motion passes. I don't think we should be going out to public hearing with a document that is talking about whether we're going to pinch the tail or not, and how we measure things on its own. If we are not going to put in management measures as 3.3, I think we pull the whole document.

CHAIR WARE: We will get to that conversation pending this motion. Emerson and then Chris Batsavage.

MR. EMERSON C. HASBROUCK: I am not speaking in favor or opposition to this motion right now, although obviously I am going to have to decide here shortly. But there are two things that keep coming to my mind. One is the Technical Committee cautions us about taking reductions of less than 10%.

If we do, we may be imposing some pain on the industry, for perhaps no gain. The other thing is that we can still implement reductions going forward by Board action, even without this Addendum. If we abandon this Addendum, or if we take out Section 3.3, we can still visit any of these options that are in here at any Board meeting, is that right?

MS. FRANKE: Thanks, Emerson, this is Emilie. As far as Board action, so taking action without an addendum. That has to be tied to a specific stock assessment. For example, if the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment indicates a less than 50% probability of rebuilding, the Board could respond to that assessment via Board action, no addendum required. But that action has to be tied to a stock assessment.

MR. HASBROUCK: Thank you for clarifying that.

CHAIR WARE: Chris Batsavage and then David Borden.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Yes, I think I am in the camp of others that are a little undecided on this motion. Going into this meeting, my thought was to include Section 3.3, but with fewer options that still cover the range of what we discussed at the previous meetings. I've heard some concerns, socioeconomic concerns, and a few concerns about this, finding some workable options to get to the 7% reduction.

Then we talked a lot about the different season closure of regions and things. That can get a little problematic. I think where I'm falling on this is, we've gone this far and talked about the reductions needed to get to a 60% probability of rebuilding, that it would probably serve everyone best to bring this out for the public to comment on, as opposed to taking it out today.

CHAIR WARE: David Borden.

MR. DAVID V. BORDEN: I'm basically opposed to the motion, and for some of the reasons that have already been noted by other people. I agree with

the point that Nichola made that current measures basically seem to be working. But that is under the assumptions that are being made.

One of those assumptions is that availability and fishing mortality won't change at some point in the future in unpredictable ways. My second biggest concern is the issue, if we fail to take something out to the public with meaningful management measures that I think it's going to cast us in a terrible light with the public, after all of the comments we've basically had from striped bass fishermen up and down the coast.

Basically saying, you have to be more conservative. You have to do something more conservative. I think the Commission is really chasing a credibility problem on this if we delete this section. I agree with Doug Grout's comment that if we take this section out, we should just take this Addendum right off the table. I completely agree with that. Once again, it's going to put us in a terrible light with the public. For those reasons I am opposed to it.

CHAIR WARE: Before we go to you, John, I know we have folks that want to comment on the Maryland proposal, so for equal opportunity on this, I am going to allow for two public comments, one in favor one opposed. If there is someone in the room or online, please raise your hand. We're going to ask you guys to keep it quick. Just want to make sure we're treating each topic fairly in this Addendum. Okay, we don't have anyone raising their hand so we're going to keep moving. John Clark and then Jeff Kaelin, and then we're going to caucus.

MR. CLARK: When I first made the motion, I was remiss in not commending the PDT, that is a heck of a lot of work, and I'm sorry in the sense that this seems rather callous to just throw it out like this. But I just once again wanted to comment on the socioeconomics. I

mean we hear a lot about the public wants this; the public wants that.

Delaware is uniquely situated, in the sense that so much of what we do in fisheries management and providing fishing access is dependent on our general fishing license. What overfishing you do in Delaware you have to have a license. Even in a state as small as we are, we're selling a hundred thousand licenses a year, which dwarfs the number of comments we get on any plan.

When we talk about what the public wants, I am kind of tuned in to what the silent majority is doing. By not buying our licenses, our license sales have not kept up with the population growth. I know some of that is due to the fact that the regulatory regime for so many species has gotten difficult. Of course, when the fishing is not good people aren't going to buy a license and go fishing.

When the fishing is very restrictive, you know we get to the point where we're more zoo keepers than fishery managers, again, it's going to be turning them off. There are a lot of people that do want to take fish home. You know as one of our charter boat captains said to me, when a guy tells his wife he's going out fishing, he wants to come home with a fish to prove to her that it actually was that day. Again, I'm not trying to be flippant about this, but I'm just saying that I see in our license sales what the public is actually doing, and that is something I think that all states can take a look at too. You know the changes we make through our regulations have repercussions in what people do fishing.

As I said before, our whole model of fisheries management in this country is based on user pay, and the users have to want to go fishing. When we make it so, so, so restrictive, 3-inch size limit and now we're talking about these seasonal closures. That is just difficult. It is going to make it to the point where; I'll do something else. I'll play video games.

CHAIR WARE: Jeff Kaelin, last word on this.

MR. JEFF KAELEN: Thanks to Katei and Emilie for the work that they've done here. There is a lot of very good analysis in here that I was happy to see, particularly around how no targeting versus no harvest closure would add up. If we were looking at a recommendation that we should take a 20% cut now to get anywhere near 44%, the chance of staying with the 2029 rebuilding trajectory, I would support moving ahead with that.

But today, with the 7% number being on the table, I find I'm just in the same position I was last winter. A lot more analysis here, and that is, what is the point of going out and another 7% or 8% reduction on the fishery, when we're making progress on the rebuilding target right now. We're hearing that that is essentially noise.

You can't even really accurately project what the benefits the stock would be with reductions that low. I think we should just pull the whole thing off, frankly, wait until we get the assessment, and then see what the payback is going to be. This is at least the second time that I feel very strongly that we ought to just stand pat, appreciate the analysis, and after the assessment, we have everything we need now, to move ahead with meaningful reductions. But I think we can be, by the way, everybody knows I'm a commercial fisherman.

I'm not a commercial striped bass fisherman. I'm making these points as a manager in New Jersey. I just don't understand why we would move ahead with 7%, given the admonishment from the PDT That we're not, you know it's essentially chasing noise right now. I am in support of the motion; in fact, I am in support of holding up the whole Addendum until we get an assessment.

CHAIR WARE: Bill, I saw your hand go up, really quick comment you want to provide?

MR. WILLIAM HYATT: Yes, just sort of in response to some of the discussion that has just

been had. I'm against this motion. I'm primarily against it for the reason that the public in a broad sense understands that there are real, real problems with striped bass, and they expect to hear from us on it.

Putting this Addendum out for the public, for the discussion, even if in the final result it doesn't end in anything, furthers that discussion with the public. I think we would, by pulling this out of the Addendum and by pulling the Addendum as a whole, we would create a large void that would become a management problem for us going forward. I would encourage folks to vote against this motion.

CHAIR WARE: I've heard conflicting opinions within states, so I am going to start with a two-minute caucus, and then if folks need another minute just let me know, but two-minute caucus. Sorry, Katie, do you want to make a quick comment?

DR. DREW: Yes, so I've heard a lot of commentary around the Board about like, people want to send this out to have a conversation with the public. I guess I just want to say that I think there are other options for that. Obviously, I would hate for us to send something out to the public that we don't actually intend to act on in any way, just to have the conversation.

I think maybe, for example, recently we did a sort of general public explanation of the science to webinar. That was very well received, where we presented what was going on with the stock assessment in layman's terms. We answered questions from the public for two plus hours, and I think we had a lot of great conversation with the public, and a great discussion about the science and where we are with the stock.

I think that is something we could recreate without the Addendum framework. If the Board wants to have a conversation with the public about, here is where we are, here is where we think we're going. Here is what we are deciding to do about this. We've heard from the public about certain options

during our last, you know when we did Addendum II.

I think there are other ways to have a conversation with the public that are not tied to this specific Addendum. If that is your only concern with pulling this Addendum, can you consider alternative measures of communication with the public that don't require the Addendum framework: That is just something to think about.

MS. FRANKE: The Chair has noted a two-minute caucus will begin now.

CHAIR WARE: I appreciate everyone's patience, particularly with me. We were trying to figure out where we're at. Just a reminder for folks, **this is a motion to remove Section 3.3**, so a yes vote is removing that section, a no vote is keeping it in. All those with a yes vote, so in favor of removing.

MS. FRANKE: Okay, in favor of removing Section 3.3 I have, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, PRFC, Maryland and Delaware.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. TONI KERNS: Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, is that Virginia with their hand up or D.C.? I can't see. District of Colombia, Maine, and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. KERNS: One abstention, NOAA Fisheries. Sorry and Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? **The motion fails 7 to 7 with 2 abstentions.** Yes, Adam, a point of clarification?

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: I thought I heard 8 for the yay on that initially.

CHAIR WARE: Yes, this is an important vote, so let's make sure we've got it right. Those states

that were in favor, just raise your hand again, double check.

MS. KERNS: Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware.

CHAIR WARE: It's good to check, Adam, thanks for that. This is where we're at. We still have a 7% reduction in the document. If that is not the percentage folks want, this would be the time to make the motion. If that is the percentage we're going to keep, then we should talk about how we can pare down the options in the document, because it is quite overwhelming at the moment.

I'll see, is there any motion for a different percentage. Seeing no hands. Let's talk about how we can pare this down. Are there any options that folks would like to remove from the document that are currently on that 7% reduction? Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Maybe one of the easier ones is we have options for a 0% commercial reduction and a 0.8% commercial reduction. Very little difference between the two, so maybe if we remove the options that are at the 0.8% reduction, take those out and just either have the 0% reduction for the commercial fishery, or 7% reduction for the commercial fishery.

CHAIR WARE: We're going to do that in a form of a motion, if you're okay with that.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, that's fine.

CHAIR WARE: Let's give staff a second to type something up, and then we have a second from John Clark. All right, Chris, can I get you to read in the motion that is on the board?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, **move to remove Option 4 from Section 3.3 (0.8% commercial reductions).**

CHAIR WARE: We have a **motion by Chris**, a second by John Clark. Chris, I think you gave some rationale, anything else?

MR. BATSAVAGE: No.

CHAIR WARE: John, I'll go to you as a seconder, any other comments?

MR. CLARK: I agree with Chris, and I just wanted to say that yes, I think if we're going to be considering 0.8, we should not require the commercial fishery to take any reduction at this point. I think it's going to be either forcing another reduction on the commercial fishery or leaving them out of reductions.

CHAIR WARE: Any other discussion on this motion? Seeing none; do folks need to caucus on this? Okay, I think we're all set. All those in favor of removing Option 4, please raise your hand. Let's do a different way. **Anyone object? Excellent, the motion passes by unanimous consent.** Any other motions to try and pare down what is in the document here? Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I think I would like to try to tackle a motion that would narrow down some of the split mode options. In consideration of the Law Enforcement Committee comments about the difficulties of different seasons between the modes and the extra challenges associated with that, as well as my thinking that the for-hire mode would not want to be looking at the larger percent reductions associated with those closures. As required, I think the motion would be sort of **remove all of the split, separate equal mode reduction options.**

CHAIR WARE: Let's give staff a second to put that up on the screen. Nichola, can I get you to read that motion into the record?

MS. MESERVE: **Move to remove all the split separate equal mode reduction options.**

CHAIR WARE: Is there a second? Dave Sikorski. Nichola, any rationale?

MS. MESERVE: In addition to what I already said, I would note that this, I believe, pares down the number of season closure tables from

something like 6 of them to maybe 3 of them, so it does make it, I think will help make the document more digestible.

CHAIR WARE: As seconder, Dave, any rationale?

MR. DAVID SIKORSKI: Yes, it's really the levels of reduction that are in the tables that I think are unrealistic, given where things lay, whether it be socioeconomically or otherwise, so I support it.

MS. FRANKE: I just want to clarify that removing all the split separate equal mode options still leaves a mode split option in the document. You have that for-hire exemption. Then we're calculating all the modes together, allowing the for-hire mode to have a wider slot, so there is still a mode split option in there. This motion is just taking out one type of the mode split options. I just want to clarify that.

CHAIR WARE: Any other comments on this motion? Pat Geer.

MR PAT GEER: Yes, can we just get clarification what options they are exactly?

MS. FRANKE: Okay, so there are obviously a lot of tables in the document. For example, you'll see all the options where it says split separate equal mode reductions, those would all be removed. You would still maintain this mode-split for-hire exemption, but you would take out, in this case Options 02D and 02E, where you're calculating the mode completely separately. Does that help?

MR. GEER: Yes, would that also include CB3F and CB4F up to the Chesapeake Bay?

MS. FRANKE: Yes, that would remove those as well.

MR. GEER: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Any other questions or discussion on the motion? Do folks need an opportunity to caucus? No, okay, we'll try it. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Okay, that motion passes by unanimous consent.** Any other options

that folks would like to pare down from this document?

We have seasons, different size limit options as well. Seeing no other hands, what I'm going to recommend is we take a six-minute break. We'll come back at four and we will brainstorm at the top of the table about the best way to move forward, so if folks could be back at four that would be great. We are back at the table and I have heard maybe there may be another motion to further pare this down. I will look to Jason McNamee for that motion.

DR. McNAMEE: I was thinking about removing the size limit option, really checking out the sizes there, so **move to remove the ocean size limit options of 37 to 40 inches and then the other one that was 38 to 41 inches.**

CHAIR WARE: All right, we have a **motion by Jason McNamee**, is there a second? Marty Gary. Any rationale, Jason?

DR. McNAMEE: Those seem really high, so if we're looking to pare it down, I can't imagine anyone would want something like that, so it seems like one that we could get rid of.

CHAIR WARE: Marty, I'll go to you as seconder, any rationale?

MR. MARTIN GARY: Just that we're going to take protective measures. The dominant year classes '14, '15, '18, are all going to be above the slot in a couple of years. It seems counter intuitive to exploit those animals. I would be in favor of removing those.

CHAIR WARE: Any other discussion or comments on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Excellent, motion passes by unanimous consent.** We now have some questions we need to answer from the PDT regarding these options. I'm going to have Emilie pull up some of the slides and walk us through it, and we'll go question by question.

MS. FRANKE: Perfect, thank you, Chair. There are a couple of questions I went over on some of the details on the season closure options. We'll go through these first two and then we'll tackle New York after. First question, should there be options for closures less than 14 days? Some of the options, the calculations do come out to some closures can meet the 7% or 8% reduction in less than 14 days. Does the Board want to keep those lower than 14-day numbers in there, or should everything be a minimum of 14?

Then the question about North Carolina. Again, North Carolina only considers striped bass caught in the ocean during Waves 1 and 6 to be part of the coastal stock. What does that mean for North Carolina's implementation? If the Mid-Atlantic Region, for example, has a closure in Wave 5, would North Carolina also do a Wave 5 closure, or should they do a Wave 1 or Wave 6 closure no matter what? We can maybe start with those two questions.

CHAIR WARE: Any guidance on the 14-day closure length? Doug Grout.

MR. GROUT: I would support the minimum 14-day closure. I think even with that short we're dealing with a two-month wave. It adds so much more uncertainty to get less than 14 days.

CHAIR WARE: Are there folks with differing opinions than that? Mike Luisi is undetermined, so we'll go to Mike.

MR. LUISI: Madam Chair, it's not a differing opinion, just maybe some clarification. Currently we have existing closures. Would the 14 days be in addition to the existing closure? The reason I ask is that if everything plays out accordingly, we may be in a situation next year where we have a long summer closure that we could add on to, if need be.

But would you need 14 days in addition to the 31 or the 15 that we already have in place, in order for it to make sense, or could you tack on 5 extra days to accomplish a certain level or reduction during that already existing closure? If there is some way to

clarify that in the Addendum, I think that would be helpful with states that have existing closures.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, so for states that have existing closures, this was actually discussed by the Board in December as well, and by the PDT that if you are able to add on the closure to an existing closure then you are still meeting the TC guidance of longer than 14 days. I think if the Board is amenable, we could note that if a state is adding the closure to an existing closure, then a number of days less than 14 could still work, for the answer to your question.

Then just one more item I thought might be helpful to remind the Board is, there are some options for the ocean where there are closures in two waves. For example, let's say an option requires closing for 10 days in Wave 3 and 10 days in Wave 6.

I just want to make sure the Board remembers that those options exist, and just make sure it's clear, if you want the 14-day minimum to apply to all options, or if you felt differently for that sort of dual wave option. I know there is a lot to think about, but I wanted to make sure the Board remembered those options.

CHAIR WARE: Right now, we have, I think the proposal is a minimum of 14 days, unless it is being added to an existing state's closure. Are folks comfortable with that? Eric.

MR. ERIC REID: It's only a question of whether they are consecutive days or not, right?

MS. FRANKE: If it's 14 consecutive days. For example, again, if you have the option that says you have to close for 10 days in Wave 3 and 10 days in Wave 6, would that be 14 days in each wave instead of 10 days in each wave? I just want to make sure the Board covers that dual wave option as well.

CHAIR WARE: Matt, I saw your hand up, do you want to comment?

MR. GATES: I think as long as the reduction is calculated by those number of days that is all right, and we're not doing like a conservation equivalency, where you have to take 14 days type of thing. You're taking the full reduction that we calculated I think is okay, right? Does that make sense?

CHAIR WARE: Okay, so this is where I'm hearing we're at. It's a minimum of 14 days unless we're adding on to an existing state closure. It's 14 consecutive days, and overall, we have to be meeting the reduction we projected. Dave Sikorski, are you good?

MS. FRANKE: I'm sorry, just to confirm with Matt. If you were saying that you are okay with less than 14, as long as it meets the reduction?

MR. GATES: Yes, when they are being added on to an existing closure.

MS. FRANKE: Got it, so adding on to existing closures, got it.

CHAIR WARE: I think we've avoided the need for a motion there, which is great. The next question was, I think the North Carolina closures. Chris, I'll go to you, not to put you on the spot, if you have any thoughts on that.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Thanks, still thinking it through. With the low catches, basically south of New Jersey, it may not matter, and from a consistency standpoint there is a reason there to take a reduction in Wave 5, for instance. It might be cleaner to have the same closure period for North Carolina.

It does deviate from how we've managed stripe bass in the ocean through ASMFC, where it's really just Wave 1 and Wave 6. I think you just split the low to no availability of striped bass in North Carolina currently. It may not matter, but if the Board feels that we should be consistent and stick with the two waves that we account for ocean striped bass in North Carolina, I'm okay with that too.

CHAIR WARE: Any other thoughts on the North Carolina closure language? Joe, you want to comment?

MR. CIMINO: Yes, I would just be interested in having the ability for consistency. You know it's been a long time. I think it's amazing, I think we should have a moment of silence looking at this data on the Atlantic Ocean, striped bass has become a rare even species for states south of New Jersey. But I think, I would like to, if Chris thinks that there is the potential that it wouldn't cause any pain, then I would like to at least keep that option alive for consistency through the whole region.

CHAIR WARE: Okay, I think the last topic we have is New York, and I'll let Emilie tee this up for us.

MS. FRANKE: For New York, as I mentioned, New York is one of the only ocean states that is already closed during part of the year. New York doesn't open until mid-April, so they are only open in Wave 2 for 16 out of the 61 days, and in Wave 6 they close a little bit early, so they are only open 45 out of the 61 days.

Just sort of thinking about if the Mid-Atlantic chose to implement a closure in Wave 2 or Wave 6, how does that apply to New York? Does New York still need to implement if it's a 14-day closure? Do they still have to implement the 14 days, 14 new closure days, so their days are going to continue to be a little bit different than the rest of the region? Just if anyone has any thoughts on how that might work.

CHAIR WARE: Marty, I'll go to you.

MR. GARY: Well, I'm not sure I have an idea of how it works, but I can tell you how it doesn't work. First of all, let me just add for the Board's discussion. These are all in statute, so it's not easy for us to change these. We're sitting in a situation where we don't open until April 15, and we close on December 15, so there is that issue.

The way you characterized it you did very nicely. Emilie, thank you. I don't know, we're trying, working with staff to identify a mechanism by which we could kind of level this playing field to a little bit fairer perspective, and I'm not sure what it is. But I look to the cumulative wisdom around this Board to see what we could do to help us out.

I think for us, Wave 2 would be the more impactful time if we had any relief that was possible in the modification of any of this language that goes into Draft Addendum. In both cases it's a challenging situation for us. I don't know if, you know Joe can add to this, but we share Raritan Bay on our border with Jersey, and I think there are some differences in the seasons there as well.

You've got, I think half of Raritan Bay would be potentially open, Joe, and I don't know, I'm not 100% sure of that fact. I think there is something there. I'll leave it there, but it's a point that is going to be challenging for us, so thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR WARE: Any other thoughts on the New York closure? I think one option forward is just to include some of the language from the PDT memo in the Draft Addendum. That gives us some flexibility on how to move forward. Seeing some nods. Okay, excellent. That is just Topic 1 of Addendum III, so, yes, Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: Before moving on to the next item, I wanted to ask if we could add in one small option, which would be a split-season option for either Maine through Mass. or Maine through Rhode Island that would be, you know a split between Wave 3 and Wave 5, similar to how there are split season options for the more southern region.

CHAIR WARE: Any concerns with that recommendation? What I would like us to do now is turn our attention to the Maryland season proposal. I think, Mike, you're going to present for us today, so I'll have you go through that presentation and then do some questions. We're trying to decide today if we add this to the Addendum. I'll pass it to you, Mike.

MARYLAND PROPOSAL FOR RECREATIONAL SEASON BASELINE OPTION

MR. LUISI: Go ahead and wait for the presentation to come up on the screen, it's not very long, it's just a handful of slides. Madam Chair, thank you, and the members of the Board, thank you for the opportunity to come here today representing Maryland, to present to you what we're discussing as Maryland's Baseline Adjustment Proposal.

If you don't like spoilers, cover your ears. But what this proposal does is that it reduces mortality on our resident stock, the fish that live in the Bay for the first five to seven years of their life that are there throughout the entirety of the year. This proposal reduces the mortality, specifically in the summer, on that component of the stock.

It realigns our recreational measures to more closely complement our other Bay jurisdictions. That was an issue that was brought up a few times, just in the presentations we've just received that Maryland, Virginia, Potomac River and D.C. were going in different directions, as far as what our seasonal structure looks like, and this proposal brings it back, gets it closer, not all the way there, but gets it closer to what our counterparts have.

It also provides for business opportunity in Maryland. You'll hear later on today some of our charterboat captains are here to present their opinions on this work, and the business opportunity need, it's essential. In the past hour or two we've heard the word socioeconomic a dozen times. It's very important to the state of Maryland that fishing continue.

Even in light of low abundance, fishing opportunity is there, this proposal gets us closer to being able to take advantage of some of that opportunity. Lastly, this proposal is more conservative than our status quo. You'll see some of the numbers as I present them, but it is

more conservative. Hopefully that piques the interest of some of the states around the table, that we're looking and considering some more conservative measures in our state that makes sense.

A little bit of background, I'm not going to read everything on this slide. But I just wanted to point out a few things, that over time since 2015, Maryland DNR has modified recreational measures or regulations seven times in ten years. We've done everything, including size limit modifications, increases and decreases, bag limit adjustments from two-to-one fish, seasonal modifications. We included no targeting closures, and also gear requirements and circle hooks.

We've done a lot, and this Board has done a lot and all the states have done a lot, to try to meet the goals that we're striving for. But this is the reality of how it has affected Maryland, and I'm going to get to that in a minute. These actions have resulted from addenda, emergency actions, as well as conservation equivalency proposals that have been made over the years, that were allowed prior to Amendment 7. Thinking through this, and having just taken the action we did, to advance Section 3.3 in the current Draft Addendum, keeping that intact. What we would be looking at, any reductions that would come as a result of the Addendum would just simply further complicate an already very disjointed and complicated fishery that you'll see here in a second.

Tacking on more reductions to this disjointed seasonal structure that we have, it's difficult to understand, and we're hoping that we can try to right the ship on that and find a solution that will be more easily understood. Stakeholders expressed concerns with all the things I've mentioned, and that their ability to adapt and reset our seasonal baseline could be the way to keep their fishery intact, so that we don't regulate it away, so that people will have an interest in fishing, and we're not moving in the direction that will keep people off the water.

We are also interested in taking a step back to refocus, as I mentioned earlier, to align more closely with Virginia and Potomac River Fisheries, and to protect our resident spawning stock, as you'll see. What this whole proposal is, is nothing more than tradeoffs between different waves and times of the year, to establish a season in Maryland that makes sense, for the reasons I've already mentioned.

I'll step through that with you. Our current regulations in Maryland are a bit complicated. I'm just going to orient you to this slide, because you'll see a few others like it as we step through the next few slides. Currently in Maryland, the season begins on January 1st in the Chesapeake Bay, and we have a catch and release fishery through the end of March.

On April 1st, we start a no targeting closure for the month of April, and then as a result of the previous actions we took, we decided to close our trophy season, because of the size limits that we would have to implement for what we were calling a trophy season in Maryland was a 28-to-31-inch fish, as a result of the actions we took previously to this.

We have a 45-day period in the spring where the season is closed. We then have a two-month window for harvest opportunity, followed by another no targeting seasonal closure for the last two weeks of July. August 1st, the harvest season opens back up, and goes until the 10th of December, and then catch and release starts again.

That is the structure of our current season. You can see in text on the left what I just explained, and to the right, so that you can understand what that pie graph is. Each one of those colors is represented by one of the colors of the seasonal style that we have implemented in Maryland. Red indicates closure periods, yellow indicates catch and release, and the gray is the harvest season, so 17% of our entire year is closed to no targeting striped bass.

Thirty percent of the entirety of the year is catch and release, and 53% is part of our harvest season. Okay, to show you just a little bit, I won't spend a whole lot of time on this, it kind of tells the story in and of itself. The general Maryland Chesapeake Bay regulations ten years or plus ago.

This is prior to the changes that we all took as a coast. I believe it was Addendum IV; I might be wrong and apologize. I'm thinking about it now, it might have been a different addendum, but we had a very simple season. Catch and release for the first part of the year, we had a short trophy season, and then a harvest season at two fish at 18 inches for the rest of the year. That has turned into the monster at the bottom of the screen, very unwieldy, very complicated, very hard thing to try to get the public to understand all of the starts and stops in our fishery.

In comparison to both Virginia and the Potomac River Fisheries, I wanted to kind of lay this out too, to give you a sense as to how Virginia/Potomac River seasons look, as compared to how ours does now as well. At the top of the chart, the Virginia season is at the top of the months, and the Potomac River Fisheries season is at the bottom of the months.

What you'll see is that our proposal looks a lot like what Potomac River Fisheries has as their seasons right now, where you start the year with a catch and release season. It develops into a harvestable season in late spring or early summer, followed by no targeting, only to then have another harvest season in the fall.

You'll see our proposal is closely aligned with Potomac River Fisheries. This slide is just to compare what the other jurisdictions in the Bay have compared to what we do. To just make one more point, the no targeting closures that we have in April and May right now, all of the boats, all of the fishermen, all of the license sales, all of the things that drive people's interest in fishing don't happen.

All of those fishermen are going to the Potomac River and they're going to Virginia, because their seasons are open, and they can go and have a catch and release opportunity, even harvest opportunities, at times where we don't. It's another issue that I'll highlight at the end of my presentation. What did we do as a state? I talked to you guys about this at our last meeting in the winter.

We put together a joint committee of Maryland stakeholders. The committee was represented by folks from the Maryland Waterman's Association, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland. We had a representative from All Tackle, which is a large tackle shop in Annapolis, and there is also one in Ocean City, so it's a little coast and Bay information from the owners of the tackle shop.

The Maryland Charter Boat Association was represented, as well as Maryland's Light Tackle Guides Association. We had commercial interest from the Town of Ocean City as well. Additional representations were Maryland's Board members, Dave Sikorski, Robert T. Brown and I participated in this, as well as Chairs of our both recreational and commercial Advisory Commissions that we have. They are Governor appointed members of the Commission that advise the department.

We also had our Maryland advisors as part of this. One of the things you won't see here is a representation of the public. That is a very difficult thing, and I know all of you know that. It is very difficult in a short amount of time to find representatives to represent the entirety of the public. One of the things that we are hoping that we will get out of this proposal and this presentation today, is the support for taking this idea to the public, so that we can get the feedback that we need to make the decisions that we will need to make in the future. The charge to the Committee was to develop a comprehensive management approach for the 2026 recreational fishing year

and beyond, that addresses the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's goal to rebuild the striped bass spawning stock biomass to the target reference point by 2029.

Nothing in the charge was taking us away from the Commission's goal, which is to rebuild the stock by 2029. In fact, the other thing that we discussed with the Committee was that any solution that we come up with must either be neutral, or have a positive impact on mortality, meaning that mortality would be less than what it is currently.

Those are the two things that we went into the meetings with the Committees about. The Technical Committee reviewed our analysis. They met twice over the period of a week or so, to go over the analysis that would be used to calculate the new baseline, as comparable to the 2024 season.

There were a number of recommendations made by the TC that have been incorporated into our analysis. One of the things that was discussed was applying different levels of discard mortality to the different waves of the year. It was decided and determined that we would stick with the 9% standard.

We also were given advice as to pooling data across years when we could, to try to reduce any type of outlier within a given year, pooling data across years was the hope to reduce some of that. I will say today that we are open to the idea of modifying this analysis, if there is something that is of particular interest to members of the Board.

We could come back in August, if there is enough of a change that is being suggested that we could preset our work that we would undertake over the summer, and present back in August. But we'll leave that up to the Board's discretion. I will say also on this slide, that I did not do this analysis. This was done by a team of specialists, who you all know very well. They are members of the Striped Bass Stock Assessment Subcommittee, as well as the Plan Development Teams, so they are using

methods and techniques in their analyses that are well understood.

They are vetted, there is no new way of thinking. These are very standard practices of using these methods to accomplish the results that we're going to present to you. Okay, so what is our proposed baseline adjustment? The proposed baseline adjustment, what it does is it moves us in a direction, as you can see here, and thinking back to the Potomac River Fisheries.

It allows for catch and release to occur in the month of April. Right now, that season is closed. If you remember, April and May, the first part of May, are closed currently in Maryland. This is addressing kind of, the main focus here is April/May, and what we've done to accommodate for the reopening of the catch and release season in April, and some harvest season in the first part of May, is that we've expanded our closure in August by half a month, by 15 days.

We've gone from a two-week closure in July, we're proposing a full month closure in August, based on this proposal. This was the selected alternative. When we met with our committee, we presented four or five different variations of seasons that we debated and discussed. This was the preferred at the time. Since we walked away from that meeting, we've had some members of the committee kind of change the direction of what they were thinking, and they are no longer in support. You are going to hear some of that today from the public. But Maryland, we think this is something that we would like to see move forward, so that we can get information and get some public comment regarding this action.

To the above the fish there, or the striped bass, you will see that the total removals of this proposal, as compared to 2024, has a net mortality of 367 fish, not 366, 367 fish. That on paper is more conservative than our current status quo measures. What we have also done

is this proposal, it takes the 17% closure that we had, and it reduces that to 9% on the pie graph.

It increases catch and release opportunity from 30% of the year to 40% of the year, and it reduces the overall number of harvest days by 2%. Putting this all together, the big picture by the numbers. We have our current rules on the left, followed by our new baseline proposal. You can see the differences there, based on how the season would be adjusted.

You could also see that based on the different types of seasons that we have, whether it's catch and release, harvest or no targeting. You can see the difference between the current regulations, have total access equaling 304 days, and total access in this fishery to us means that there is opportunity for catch and release and/or harvest.

Any of the days of the year that you can open your door and get in your car and go to your boat and go fishing without a no-targeting closure, would be considered day of access. Our proposal increases that by 30 days, it provides more opportunity on the water, but not compromising our efforts for conservation, because I believe that the focus now is going to be more on protecting those resident fish in August.

The mortality in August can be awfully great. In summary, this proposal is an effort to refocus our conservation effort to protect the resident stock. It also helps us realign with our neighbors. Effort in Wave 4 is redistributed to the spring of the year, to allow for a catch and release fishery in April, and an earlier start date for the summer/fall fishery in May.

Mortality savings alone from closing the entire month of August is a win. It's a win-win for the fish. The discard mortality in the summer months in the Chesapeake Bay, it's terrible, and this will help those resident fish get through that time period, that bottleneck of the summer months. This is our opportunity to address the needs of the stock.

We have low abundance of resident fish. The interest here is to protect those resident fish. I hope the Board doesn't lose sight of that. Allowing

access to catch and release when the conditions are much better in the spring is a win-win for both the fish and for people who have an interest in fishing.

Opinions are split on this issue in Maryland, as I mentioned. However, we would like the opportunity to take this out to the public, to solicit public feedback on the topic, and we realize the challenges that that presents to all of you, as members of a state that you have skin in the game, because what we save today, they will be coastal fish tomorrow. The more effort we can put in protecting the few residents we have is going to be beneficial for the coastal stock at some point in time. But we do realize the challenges that going out to your public about a proposal from the state of Maryland, and the comments that you'll receive. We realize how challenging that can be from the state perspective, and having to come back and vote on whether or not to advance something, is something that can be difficult.

But this Board does difficult things, and we have taken significant actions to address rebuilding of the striped bass population throughout the range of its stock. It shows even more today in our moving the Addendum III forward. I'll close by saying that this proposal is just one more action on top of all the other actions that helps us simplify our rules.

It protects the resident fish that are in dire need of some protection, and it gets us closer to our ultimate goal, which is to get the spawning stock back up to its target level and I'll leave it there, Madam Chair. I don't think I have another slide after that. I think we can stop there and I'm happy to take any questions.

I believe Angela Giuliano and Alexi Sharov are both, they are not here. They might be on the phone if there is a really in-depth technical question, that maybe they can help me out with the answer. But I am happy to take any questions that folks have, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Thanks for your work on this, I know it was a lot of work. We're going to start with questions from the Board, and we'll do a few comments from the public, and then we'll go to comments from the Board. Questions for Maryland. Start with John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Thank you for the presentation, Mike. I was just curious, in your reducing your no targeting days by 30, if I recall, do you have any measure of how effective the no targeting has been? I think I recall at one of the previous meetings that Maryland DNR has not written up violations for no targeting violations as of this point. I'm just wondering if you've noticed through MRIP that you do have a reduction in effort since you've gone to nontargeting in those months.

MR. LUISI: Yes, the answer is yes to the reduction in effort. There is an absolute difference between a day that is open for fishing, whether it's harvest or catch and release, and a day that is closed and no targeting. The Bay is empty on the days where there is no targeting. How empty, I can't get into. But that is our understanding.

MR. CLARK: I just recall that you were asked at one of our last meetings about how many violations are written up. What you're saying is there is very good compliance with the no targeting right now.

MR. LUISI: There is good compliance with the no targeting. They are not writing tickets all the time. I know ticket writing on this is difficult to, so that is another challenge with no targeting. We feel that the no targeting measures are working. There are very few boats on the water during those times, and I'll leave it at that.

CHAIR WARE: Doug Grout and then Marty Gary.

MR. GROUT: Thank you, Mike, I appreciate the large amount of work that you went through to come up with this with the constituents that you had. I just had one question around, does the state of Maryland have any aerial closures during the spring for recreational fishermen, when they are on

the spawning grounds at all anymore, or is that gone by?

MR. LUISI: Yes, we have all of the closures that are on the spawning grounds are still in existence, and they will not change. Nothing that we already have, as far as closures for areas, would change at all based on this.

CHAIR WARE: Clarification there. Marty Gary and then Chris Batsavage, did you have your hand up? There was someone in that corner, okay, go to Chris then.

MR. GARY: A question for you, Mike. You referenced PRFC a couple of times. I was there when we formulated those regulations. You know we've worked with Maryland DNR Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment Project folks, Tom Parham and his crew. When we took our reductions, you all helped us with the calculus on that, and we wound up having to take something like six weeks. I think it was July 5th or 6th to August 20th.

That was just the math on paper. But the one thing we wanted to apply was to look at the hypoxic volumes in magnitude, along with the surface water temperatures. I think everybody in the room has heard this enough, that the challenges for striped bass in the Potomac and the upper Chesapeake Bay in Maryland's jurisdiction is the squeeze effect that occurs with these high-water temperatures in the upper part of the water column, coupled with these high hypoxic issues in the lower part of the water column that persist in July and August.

T had helped us kind of quantify the perfect timing for that. I don't remember it exactly, but it was somewhere around July 10, 15, and it persisted into early August. There isn't a magic formula, I'm sure. But my question to you is, when you came up with a closure, which now looks like it's proposed for all of August, is that right?

Is that more of an artifact of trying to keep it simple for enforcement, or are you trying to actually match up and provide the protection during the worst and most formidable times for the fish, or it's a combination of both? I'm just curious.

MR. LUISI: Madam Chair. Yes, Marty, it's a little bit of both. We definitely, well can you state the question you want me to answer again?

MR. GARY: Yes, I'm just trying to figure out what caused you to go shift all the way to August. You had two weeks in July, correct, which overlaps what I understand to be a pretty critical time period. Now it's moved into all of August, so I was just trying to figure out the rationale for picking that time.

MR. LUISI: Yes, when we sat down with our stakeholders, that was part of the discussion at the stakeholder level, the economics around the times in the summer. July and August are the same wave, so all the math is the same for the whole wave. As we discussed it, we do see the peak of our summer temperatures at around between the middle of July and the end of August. However, somebody brought it up to me and they said, well, you're going to be more tired at 26 miles than you are at 18 miles, if you're running a marathon. If you get into August, you've made it that far and it's not getting any better until September/October. That is as critical, if not more, than that peak, that spike that happens in July. It was part of the tradeoff between the different user groups and taking into consideration the economics around it as well. There was a little bit of everything.

CHAIR WARE: Chris Batsavage and then Cheri.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, thanks, Mike, for presenting this proposal for a different suite of seasons. I noticed that you extend the catch and release period in December by four days, and that is at a time when presumably, either way catch and release mortality is going to be low.

Was wondering, I guess the rationale for cutting back on the harvest period during a low water

temperature time, as opposed to looking at the other times of the year, when there might be more of an ecological benefit, or is this just a matter of trying to reach consensus with the different stakeholders to come up with this? Just trying to understand that little part of this proposal.

MR. LUISI: It's similar to kind of Marty's answer, it's a little bit of everything that goes into that. December, originally when we ran the new baseline, we had numbers that came out that would have stopped our no targeting summer closure on, let's say the August 29th, which you can close it on August 29, but it would be more easily understood if it was on the 31st.

We tweaked a little bit of some of the numbers, to make the seasons understandable. December was, that is at the end of our harvest season, so to trim back December by a couple days was at the end of one of our harvest seasons, so it just goes right into catch and release at that point. It was just a balancing act, Chris, honestly, to try to get everything to align.

CHAIR WARE: Cheri Patterson and then Eric Reid.

MS. CHERI PATTERSON: A lot of work here, Mike, thank you for pulling this together with your industry. My question has to do with when they are coming in to spawn and staging and such. Has there been any studies done on catch and release mortality when they are staging or when they are going into rivers to spawn?

I am not talking about the areas that you have closed. But the staging aspect of things, because it looks like you're, again, I'm not sure. It just looks here that your months of no targeting closure and your no trophy season were closed and now they're open for catch and release. I guess the catch and release mortality I'm thinking about, that must be higher than

when you had it closed, so has that been looked at?

MR. LUISI: The answer is yes. There will be mortality that occurs from taking a no targeting closure and converting that to a catch and release fishing opportunity, but that additional mortality is offset by the additional 15 days of closure being taken for no targeting in the summer. Specifically, to the analysis you get to the numbers. For every day in August that we have as a closure, it equals 7 to 8 days' worth of catch and release fishing in Wave 3. That is the value of one day in one wave versus another day in another wave, as this analysis was done.

MS. PATTERSON: Okay, thanks. I guess I'm still a little unsure, because when they're coming in to spawn, they have that stressor. I'm not sure it's equivalent to environmental stressors, but they still have that stressor. Are they more susceptible to catch and release mortality during that timeframe.

MR. LUISI: I will say that I am not aware of any study. I'm not aware of a study that says that they are more susceptible to mortality while staging. If someone else knows that information, it is certainly welcome. Madam Chair, Dave Sikorski, as a member of the committee that we worked with has also asked if he could maybe help with some of the answer too.

CHAIR WARE: Yes, absolutely, go for it, Dave, and then I do have Eric Reid next in line.

MR. SIKORSKI: The state has looked at what is the more realistic catch and release mortality across different temperature regimes and different hook uses, so on and so forth, it's varied from like 0.8 percent in the colder water periods up to maybe high as 30, plus 40% in the summertime. It gets at your question about the change in mortality.

We're being more conservative by closing all of August, and so that way we're not allowing fishing to happen when there is a really high level of discard mortality. We know that the percent mortality is way high. Spring is the opposite, there is roughly a 3% catch and release mortality.

Then we have a seasonal component, a timeline when we close certain regions to protect them when they're staging. Currently, effective March 1st, you can no longer fish in a large number of areas. That is a massive no targeting closure that Maryland has had in place since the nineties.

None of that is changing. Essentially, what we're doing, like Mike said, is balancing some of the different approach at different times of the year. With regard to studies of impact on future spawning, is that what you're asking, because of the fishing that is going on, or have I got at some of your questions?

MS. PATTERSON: Well, right, it's a little different when you're talking about having mortality for fish that are trying to spawn, as opposed to ones that have already spawned and are in the Bay in the summertime. How much are you removing through discard mortality that aren't making it to the spawning grounds for recruitment purposes, that's all? I think you may have covered it by you saying that there are large area closures around both staging and spawning activities.

MR. SIKORSKI: I won't go into my underlying data concerns that exist, there was a lot of this. But it was a really thorough discussion and analysis, and there are actually recorded meetings, if anybody wants to listen to them, of our committee meeting.

CHAIR WARE: All right, a podcast for a ride home, if anyone is looking for it. Eric Reid, and then we're going to go to comments from the public.

MR. REID: Thanks for the state of Maryland for doing this. My question is, what is the decision point for the Board, whether to put this document in the public hearing document? Okay, so that is our decision today. What happens after that? After we get the public hearing, we come back to address whatever those findings are, what happens then?

CHAIR WARE: If this is added to the document, once we go out for public hearings, at final action it would be a question of, are we incorporating this into the fishery management plan for striped bass for Maryland.

MR. REID: This is going to go to public hearings from Maine to North Carolina.

CHAIR WARE: If all of those states would like a public hearing, yes.

MR. REID: Okay, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: I know there are members of the public that have been really patient in waiting. Just a show of hand in the room of who would like to comment on the Maryland Proposal. I'm just going to go in order of who is sitting in front in the middle row, and then in the back row. We'll go the reverse order. I'll let you guys decide the order in which you go up to the microphone. But I will just ask you guys to keep it brief. I know you have been here a while, but we are at five o'clock. Please, just introduce yourself, thank you.

MR. BRIAN HARDMAN: I'm Brian Hardman; I'm the President of the Maryland Charter Boat Association, so I represent those and the recreational sector that wants to catch and harvest fish, they really don't have an organization in the state of Maryland. I just wanted to make a couple comments.

Maryland Chesapeake Bay has always been referred to as the nursery and the spawning grounds for rockfish. It was over, I think five years ago, that Maryland sounded the alarm about the declining young of the year and juvenile index, and this prompted, as Mike had said, the closure for both in April for harvest and catch and release.

Last year, 2024, the crisis was still so severe that he took out an additional two weeks from us at that point, and closed it for harvest. He said that was to protect the female spawning stock. Somehow magically, over the last nine months, this crisis has resolved itself and is over. I don't even know how that is even possible.

The new baseline proposal moves a few items around, but the number one primary goal of this is to open up April catch and release, and then also takes another additional two weeks away from harvest. The word to protect female spawning stock is not even mentioned in this proposal. I don't know why that's not even an issue.

Maryland doesn't even say the phrase anymore, needing to protect female spawning stock. The proposal has a lot of Maryland math, which a lot of time I've been through it. It just doesn't add up. One example is, they give numbers of, the harvest is 193 days and catch and release is 111 days. The real number is, harvest is 193 days, catch and release are 304 days. You can catch and release on harvest days. They shouldn't leave these types of things out. There is a phrase in their proposal that says, April has been closed, keep in mind, for five years, that the assumed effort would be the same as 2024. It's impossible if you have April closed for five years and you're going to open it up to catch and release, the activity is going to explode in there.

Unfortunately, they are trying to use low or no effort months and project forward. April historically has been the number one month for rockfish spawning. It has always been that way. We had a few years where the winter was warm, and so they spawned earlier. But this past year it is safe to say that in 2025 it was back to historical month of April.

Yet this is the very month that Maryland wants to open up and unleash an onslaught of catch and release activity when these fish are ripe with eggs. Now keep in mind, this closure was so severe last year that he took another two weeks away from us, to protect the female spawning stock. Yesterday I spoke with a captain that was on the spring survey boat in the Chesapeake Bay. The biologist onboard said in April, you are sometimes days, if not hours away from the fish spawning. This is every April, and this is factual data.

CHAIR WARE: Brian, I'm just going to ask you to start wrapping up the comment, we had a two-minute timer there.

MR. HARDMAN: Oh, I'm sorry.

CHAIR WARE: That's okay, you're doing great.

MR. HARDMAN: I did speak with a commercial pound netter that said that they had a net that was filled with rockfish, and they went to roll the fish out of the pound net on it. They weren't handling and they weren't under stress, but these fish were discharging their eggs, and that is the one thing that never comes up about the discharge of these eggs.

I did speak with one of the marine biologists, and they said the female fish are not exposed to gravity, and that is another thing that hurts their egg sac. I'll wrap it up. My question is this, we're in year six of a ten-year rebuilding program, and Maryland wants to change course and go backwards and open up April catch and release.

I do believe there is nothing in this proposal that is good for the female spawning stock, good for the fish or good for the rebuilding process. I'm asking for status quo, and for this proposal to be rejected, so that we can continue to protect the female spawning stock. I thank you for your time.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you. All right, there were two other hands in the room. We've got a two-minute timer, but you guys are generally pretty good about that.

CAPTAIN ROBERT NEWBERRY: My name is Captain Robert Newberry; I'm Chairman of the DelMarVa Fisheries Association. All I can say is that what Maryland did has really confused the daylights out of me, and I consider myself pretty analytical. We see that we have taken an extra month off, or two weeks for our charterboat industry to not have any income. But at the prime spawning time of the year, which is, pre-spawn is March, April and May is post spawn. Now we're going to permit catch and release. We've heard from people saying, oh it's a 0.8 percent reduction. Well, wrong, wrong, wrong.

There are three studies that I can say, where the buildup of lactic acid in fish, regardless of water temperatures, regardless of water temperatures, has catastrophic effect on their ability to spawn, ability to mature, and ability to reproduce.

Those are facts. You want them, I'll send you the three studies. I set them to DNR, never heard back, so. What we have to consider is, the thing that confuses me, Addendum VI is to protect the SSB. The whole day I've heard here. Everybody wants to protect the SSB. But in the process, Maryland is bringing in the whole month of March.

How many people are going to be out taking advantage of this fishery? They want to propose it as a new economic driving motor factor for our tourism. What in the name of God happened when we lost 70% of our charter boats in one year? One year. We didn't hear a socioeconomic study coming in and all this.

This is just a bunch of stuff you're being handed, just to benefit a special interest group. I think it really needs to be considered, and this Commission has to say no to this for Maryland. Status quo, we're fine, and it was great to hear that when we lost 77 boats that we were going to put this whole Addendum on hold. But thank you very much for the time, BOOM, two minutes, thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you. I think there was one more comment in person, and then I have seen some hands online. We're going to choose one of those at random.

MR. TOM WEAVER: Hi, everybody, and Madam Chair, thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Commission. My name is Tom Weaver; I am a full-time charter captain in the Chesapeake Bay. I am here to support the Maryland proposal for the new baseline for Maryland. I represent a group of fishing captains and a large group of recreational anglers who are not represented here.

I represent the Maryland Light Tackle Guides Association. I am a member of the Maryland Striped Bass "Gospels" the stakeholder group, putting this proposal together. The group agreed that the current baseline is not working. People are going out of business, fishing and boating in Maryland generally is 4.2 billion annually.

By now businesses are failing and charter boats are being sold, and the fish are in trouble. Under ASMFC, Maryland operates under an adaptive plan. I have fished in Maryland for 35 years. The fishery is changing very rapidly, particularly in the last five years. This is a generational opportunity for Maryland to address its local fishery.

Current to Chesapeake Bay mishmash baseline was arrived at, in hindsight, through many stages of poor management decisions. This new baseline cleans this up and is a good and fair baseline solution that promotes access to the fishery, supports businesses, and safeguards the striped bass population. I urge you to support this and send it to public comment. Thank you.

CHAIR WARE: Thank you very much. Then just at random here I see Evan Bengamin online, if you would like to give a comment for two minutes.

MS. KERNS: Evan, I see that you are unmuted, but we cannot hear you. If you want to quickly check your microphone.

CHAIR WARE: I'm sorry, Evan, we're not able to hear you. I think we're going to move on now. We appreciate folks coming and providing your comment. We're bringing it back to Board discussion now on the Maryland proposal. What I would like to do, given the hour, is get a motion on the board, and then folks can react to that motion. Robert Brown, do you have a motion?

MR. ROBERT T. BROWN: No, Ma'am, but you said you had questions, a minute ago, and I didn't say anything on then. What the state of Maryland proposed, and I just want to make my comments on it. Back in protecting this spawning striped bass breeding stock. Back in 2018, when that raised the

target and the threshold so high, many scientists said that they would not be able to maintain it, and that is one of the problems we have right here today, and you've seen it.

Why do we have to keep cutting, cutting to try to meet this 2029 stage on these rockfish? I just wanted to bring that up, and also protecting this spawning stock. I want to commend Mike on the good presentation he had. However, when it comes to April, which is the spawning of rockfish in Maryland, and when they are in the lower part of that Bay in the deep water, then you're going to have catch and release.

You are catching these fish in 40, 50, 60 feet of water, and these fish could be 25 pounds, 30 pounds, 40 pounds, whatever, and you have to fight them to get them all the way up to the top. Once you get them up to the top, then you catch them with a dip net, put them into the boat. Then you've got to take and unhook it. Then you wait and next thing they hold it up above your head, getting pictures taken, they are really proud of it, hey that's good, that's all nice and fine.

But what is this doing to these fish that haven't spawned yet? I agree with most of this stuff on this, but when it comes to the month of April and this catch and release, it should be no targeting again, for the simple reason, we need to protect our spawning stock, especially when we had a six-year low. Hopefully that could be changed into it.

CHAIR WARE: I am looking for a motion to start the discussion. Dave Sikorski.

MR. SIKORSKI: **Move to add the Maryland Baseline Season Option to Draft Addendum III,** and if you get a second, I'll provide rationale.

CHAIR WARE: Motion by Dave Sikorski, second by John Clark, and some rationale, Dave.

MR. SIKORSKI: Yes, throughout the day today, I don't know who made the agenda, but kudos, because it has really helped me work through some of the logic of what we're asking, some of the things happening in other fisheries, and how it relates to what Maryland has been experiencing over the last five years, five seasons that is. Because the current regs we have, except for the two fish versus one fish, which changed last January, and the trophy season, which changed in 2024. Openly they've been in place for five years, and they have been a bit of an experiment, an experiment to protect spawning stock biomass, their experiment to stretch our closures, make them broader, to see if that can affect a positive outcome in our spawn.

It would experiment to do sector separation, and allow a pilot program to exist for for-hire captains to maintain a larger bag limit, when the rest of the public could not. Ultimately, today as I've been even thinking about this Addendum in striped bass, and the section we almost removed. The entire time I'm sitting there, we ended up voting 7 to 7.

I'm thinking, we don't know what we're getting ourselves into, if we send out this mess with different people with different rules, because the Board doesn't know what Maryland has been living through. As a Board member I've heard from multiple constituents. The folks here of course, but also many others about the impact that it's had.

Isn't it ridiculous that is to say, you can't go fishing, when we've been allowed to for 25 years with tremendous results, sorry, 35 years now with tremendous results for the striped bass fishery since we reopened it. Right, think about what has happened over the last 35 years. It's not until the last five that we said, April is all of a sudden really important.

There are a lot of underlying politics, and I'm glad the word special interest came up, because some people got special interest in 2020. Many people didn't. Commercial was left out of reductions, and certain captains that agreed to electronically report were given a benefit. What about the general public? The only way the general public can weigh

in on what Maryland created on our own. It is now constrained by this Board, is through including this in the Addendum, and for that reason alone the public deserves that voice.

Last point, Captain Weaver who approached the microphone. He told me that the only reason his group of 62 guides is organized, is because their season to make money early in the year was taken away, and Keith Frazier from All Tackle, I think e-mailed all of you yesterday, another constituent that I have to answer to, just like Mike and others, who has been completely gutted in this spring season in his shop in Annapolis.

These are the people that need the opportunity to come to the meeting in August, come to the meeting in October, participate in public meetings, because they don't have that. Three gentlemen are here to provide input on Maryland's recreational anglers. I hear a lot more, just like all of you will. I know we're going to hear from lots of people if we open this up. The general public deserves to weigh in on what is going on in Maryland, just like they do coastwide. Please support this motion.

CHAIR WARE: Over to John Clark, the seconder. Any rationale?

MR. CLARK: I think Dave has laid it out really well. I think Maryland has done a really nice analysis here. I understand they are not going to make everybody happy, but I think it deserves to get out to the public and get comments, and see where it goes from there.

CHAIR WARE: All right, so we're looking for comments on this motion. We'll start with Doug Grout.

MR. GROUT: I noticed at the end of your written report, Mike, that there is a statement that says, however, some of the original methods had to be further modified once the full set of 2021 to 2024 estimates were considered. Because of the timing issues these

have not been reviewed by the Technical Committee and SAS. I was wondering if we could add a minor modification to this that we approve it contingent upon a final review by the TC and SAS of those modifications that were made.

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to take that as a motion to amend, Doug. Okay, so give us a second and we'll type that out. Okay, we've just been coordinating at the top of the table here. But, Doug Grout, can I get you to read in your motion to amend, and we'll see if there is a second.

MR. GROUT: Sure, **Motion to Amend to add contingent upon final review by the TC and SAS of the modifications that were made.**

CHAIR WARE: Is there a second? Ray Kane. Some rationale, Doug, or you're all set?

MR. GROUT: Yes, the rationale is I think it should be fully reviewed by the Technical Committee, and I understand the time constraints here.

CHAIR WARE: Ray Kane, I'll go to you as seconder.

MR. RAYMOND W. KANE: Yes, I agree with Doug, I mean the Commission is going to be voting on Maryland's proposal, so I would feel better if the TC can find time for this proposal, like this whole spawning in the state as made evident by the number of speakers today, is April, so thank you.

CHAIR WARE: I just want to clarify what I think the implication of this motion is. I don't think we would be able to have, schedule a TC call and approve this document for public comment today, and be able to accomplish all of that by the August Board meeting. If the motion to amend passes, we would schedule that TC call between May and August.

We would come back in August to again consider approval of the document for public comment. I just want to be really clear and up front about what this means in terms of timing. Are there any questions specific to that timing discussion? A question?

MR. SIKORSKI: It is a question to, I made some assumption that in preparation for the Addendum, the level of analysis is done. But I can understand how that is not the case. Can you explain what happens between now and, I've confused myself, I'm going to stop. Go to Jay.

CHAIR WARE: No worries, Jay, go ahead.

DR. McNAMEE: I have been wondering about this. You said that the Amendment is the thing that kind of bumps us outside of August and pushes to October, but the baseline itself doesn't, so that would keep us on the current track, is that correct?

CHAIR WARE: I think we're on the edge already, in terms of the changes that we've made to the Addendum, and if we add this, I think we're on the edge of whether we can approve this for May or not. But definitely the motion to amend pushes us to August to consider approval for public comment.

MS. FRANKE: Just to expand on that. If the Maryland Baseline Season option is added, we need to make some tweaks to the Chesapeake Bay closures to account for this new baseline that we'll be working off of, and have to add basically duplicate tables for the Bay under this new baseline. We, the PDT, briefly talked about this.

I think we know how we would approach that. I think as the Chair said, we're kind of right on the edge. We could probably do that in the next few weeks, but if the Board wanted to see the document with those changes, as well as the other changes we made today, we could come back in August.

CHAIR WARE: Follow up, Jason?

DR. McNAMEE: I'm going to sneak this in, it's not truly a follow up, I don't think. Is there something that Maryland, these tweaks, that is different than what you've done analytically so

far that would cause us concern that we would want further review, or is it just small modifications to what you've already done that was approved?

CHAIR WARE: Maryland, I'll pass that to you, or we can phone a friend online if that is helpful.

MR. LUISI: I don't know that we need to phone a friend. It is hard to know what somebody is going to think is important or different, how different. What I know is that we presented our analysis to the Technical Committee, they provided comments back to us, and we folded those comments back into our analysis. It wasn't relooked at after we did that work.

I would be under the assumption that we would simply take the analysis that was set to staff as a part of this presentation today, and just have that relooked at by the Technical Committee, to make sure they are comfortable with us having modified our original approach to accommodate their concerns at the first Technical Committee meeting. I don't know that there is going to be anything that would change, at least at this point right now. I'm not anticipating any changes to the analysis. I don't think there is anything in there that would send up a red flag.

CHAIR WARE: We are focused on our motion to amend. Any discussion on the motion to amend? Nichola Meserve.

MS. MESERVE: I support the motion for the TC and SAS to look at those changes again, and I would also encourage any comments from them on kind of the larger picture of the new baseline that has been raised in public comment. There was also one piece of the public comment that raised a concern about the assumption that going from no targeting to catch and release in April. The assumption is that there won't be an increase in effort.

I had a similar concern about that, and have been kind of putting it aside and thinking that the other assumption that it's a 9% release mortality rate throughout the year probably dwarfs that consideration. But if it's going to go to the TC, I

think looking at those modifications and just the proposal in general, and incorporating some TC feedback into the document may help as well.

CHAIR WARE: Any other discussion, again, we're focused on the Motion to Amend. John Clark.

MR. CLARK: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. If we approve this motion that means we can't go out to public comment until August, which means we won't have a final Addendum until 2026, which means that implementation wouldn't be, would the Addendum still be done this year? Okay, it will just be pushed back one meeting.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, correct. If the Board approved this for public comment in August, we would do public hearings in September, and the Board would make a final decision in October.

MR. CLARK: Okay, and that still leaves all the states enough time to implement by 2026 if needed.

MS. FRANKE: Yes, that would be up to the Board to determine what the reasonable implementation date would be for 2026.

CHAIR WARE: I'm not seeing any more hands for the motion to amend. Nichola, okay. We're going to go to Nichola and then we're going to caucus.

MS. MESERVE: I'm trying to read Toni's mind, I think, and as I was thinking as well, that the motion to initiate this Addendum was very clear that it was in the realm of possibility that we might wait until the annual meeting to take final action. Every state was asked at the time, does that give you enough time to implement the measures, and the answer was yes.

I am comfortable with the delay, and even if this Amendment were not here, given the breadth of changes that we have been making to the document today, I feel much more

comfortable with seeing another draft of it in August, before approving it for public comment.

CHAIR WARE: I am going to encourage a two-minute caucus, because there is a lot going on here. We are considering the motion to amend, so a two-minute caucus. All right, does any state need more time to caucus, just raise your hand. Seeing no hands, we are going to call the question. Just a reminder, we are voting on the motion to amend. **All those in favor of the motion to amend, please raise your hand.**

MS. FRANKE: I'll just call them out; Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, PRFC, Maryland, Delaware, Maine and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: And D.C. Is there anyone opposed to the motion to amend? Any abstentions? We have one abstention from NOAA Fisheries. Any null votes? The motion passes 15 to 0 with 1 abstention. We'll give staff a second to combine that with the main motion, and then we will vote again.

Does anyone need more caucus time? I am sensing folks are good. Okay, **we're going to call the question, so we now have our main motion. Is there any objection to the main motion? Okay, any abstention? Two abstentions from the Services. Great, so that motion passes unanimously with two abstentions.**

MR. GARY: New York has a null.

CHAIR WARE: One null, thank you, Marty, that was my bad. That motion is going to pass 13 to 2 abstentions and one null vote. Where we are in the landscape of Addendum III. We have added the Maryland proposal to Addendum III. We are now not going to be considering approving the document for public comment today, that will happen in August.

We still have two more issues, tagging, which I would like to try and take up today, and then total

length, which I'm not sure if there is much discussion on. We do have a hard stop at 5:50, so if the tagging discussion takes longer than that, we will just pause that and continue that discussion in August. I saw some hands, I'm going to go to tagging next, is that in response to tagging or on the previous issue? Okay, Nichola and then Adam.

MS. MESERVE: Before we move on to tagging, I did want to offer, or have a little bit of a discussion maybe about, that while the Maryland proposal is working through the addendum process, it has all the bells and whistles of conservation equivalency proposal, and this Board previously adopted provisions about conservation equivalency that add an uncertainty buffer to address certain types of fishery programs, when there is uncertainty in the data.

I want to read the part of Amendment 7 as to why there is an uncertainty buffer that is applied. It says that the intent of the uncertainty buffer is intended to increase the alternative measure's probability of success in achieving equivalency with the FMP standard. I think that when we take it to public comment, there is going to be a lot of the public that see this as a conservation equivalency proposal.

It leads me to wanting a sub-option in the document that would have an uncertainty buffer that could be applied to the Maryland Proposal. I guess I could make that as a motion, if we have this discussion. I would **move to task the PDT with developing a sub-option for the Maryland proposal that would incorporate an uncertainty buffer.**

CHAIR WARE: Okay. Give us a second to get that on the board and we will go from there.

MS. KERNS: Nichola, just a simple question, do you want that uncertainty buffer to be as prescribed in the FMP, or is this at the discretion of the PDT?

MS. MESERVE: I think it's at the discretion of the PDT, but they could use the Amendment 7 provision as a starting point for that discussion.

CHAIR WARE: Nichola, just have you confirm, or best probably just to read it in, make sure we've got it.

MS. MESERVE: **Move to task the PDT with developing a sub-option for the Maryland Season Option that would add an uncertainty buffer.**

CHAIR WARE: We have a motion by Nichola, I saw a second from Cheri Patterson. I think you did provide some rationale, anything else? I'll got to Cheri. Any rationale, Cheri?

MS. PATTERSON: Nothing additional, I just think we should have additional contingencies around this.

CHAIR WARE: Any discussion on this motion? Okay, I'm not seeing any, but I definitely feel like Maine needs to caucus, so I'm going to do a two-minute caucus, and we'll go from there. Does anyone else need more caucus time or folks are good? I do want to, Mike Luisi, I think you had requested to make a comment on this. I will allow that before we vote.

MR. LUISI: I just wanted to make the point that we've addressed this at the last few meetings. We were looking for an opportunity to advance these ideas through an amendment or an addendum. There has been a lot of discussion about conservation equivalency. I think that point has been made, and it has been put to rest that this is an option in a plan, it's an addendum to a plan, it is not conservation equivalency. Therefore, I don't think the justification to add additional uncertainty buffers is appropriate, and I am not going to support the motion.

CHAIR WARE: **We are going to call the question here. All those in favor of the motion, please raise your hands.**

MS. KERNS: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, D.C., North Carolina and New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. KERNS: Maine, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and PRFC.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. KERNS: NOAA Fisheries and Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? That motion passes 9 to 5 with 2 abstentions. Adam, you had previously raised your hand. I will go to you next.

MR. NOWALSKY: Given that the Board had had the AP weigh in on this Draft Document, and given the substantive changes that have been made today, I would just tell you that it would be helpful to me, when we come back here in August, to make a decision what to do with this document, if the AP could take a look at the things we've added before then.

CHAIR WARE: We have about 15 minutes left. I am going to venture into the tagging issue, and we will see where we get. Is there a motion on the tagging issue? Jason McNamee.

DR. McNAMEE: We'll just get right to it. I'll offer a motion. **Move to remove the entire Section 3.2 Commercial Tagging Requirements: Point of Sale vs. Point of Harvest from the document.**

CHAIR WARE: We have a **motion by Jason**, is there a second? Nichola Meserve. Jay, I'll go to you for some rationale.

DR. McNAMEE: I have like a whole thing written here. I'll try to be super quick, because it's late. Rhode Island is one of the states with Point-of-Sale tagging. We believe it is working

as intended by the FMP, so we don't see why there is a need to make a change, and North Carolina and Massachusetts can offer whether they feel the same about that.

There was no evidence presented that indicated that there is illegal harvest occurring more frequently in the Point-of-Sale states relative to the Point of Harvest states. Not saying that it is not occurring, but there is no evidence to suggest that one is better than the other. By forcing states with Point of Sale to switch creates a large new burden on a few states for no obvious benefit.

I think folks will point to some of the Law Enforcement Committee comments, and so I will do the same to say that there were dissenting views presented during that meeting. While I acknowledge that the majority position was to require that or to recommend that Point of Harvest tagging, the expertise from the states with Point-of-Sale tagging did not see the need to enact this change to improve management of the species.

Rhode Island has had a tagging program since 1990; we were sort of at the forefront of that. Several decades in we've got a well-established program, works well. We would like to keep that in place. In particular for Rhode Island and Massachusetts, we have very different regulations between the commercial and the recreational fisheries.

If that is a concern, that somehow those two fisheries are being conflated, that isn't a concern in those states, because of the differences. Finally, you know I recognize there is only one of several options in the document that is going out for public comment, but this is an opportunity to simplify, by removing this topic, which won't impact the effectiveness of the remaining options for conservation of the resource.

CHAIR WARE: Nichola as the seconder.

MS. MESERVE: To be brief, I will just say that I agree with everything that Jason said, and also note that the PRT was already tasked and is at some point supposed to undertake a 10-year review of

the commercial tagging program. I feel like this has kind of been rushed into this document prior to that process being able to carry forward as was intended, so I also prefer to remove it right now from the document.

CHAIR WARE: Discussion on the motion. John Clark.

MR. CLARK: I'm sure you'll be surprised to know that I fully oppose this. One of the reasons that I brought up at the last meeting that I wanted this in this document is because as we've seen, we are going ahead with a proposal to take reductions. One of the options, which is 3.3, Option 3, which has the 0% commercial quota reduction, which I would hope if we do get to that point that that is where this Board would go.

But I think one of the things that would really increase confidence among our recreational community in particular, who have voiced many times that they feel like the commercial fishing sector gets away with things, is to show that we're really tightening this up. The main reason to include this option is to increase enforceability, which in turn, as I just said.

While I think improved both the Board's and the recreational fishing public's confidence, that the commercial fishery is truly only taking the allocated amount, because the commercial fishery has always been hit hard by reductions. I mean I just looked, Delaware, we're about 7% of the actual quota that is landed that is fished of the ocean quota.

We've done things to not take the full reductions in the past, but even so, we are now 31% over the past ten years, and that just this year alone, based at the market price that is a lot of money. That is like \$500,000 that we've taken away from that commercial fishery just in Delaware.

You know the whole idea that your fishery is that well policed that you really would know. I

mean as the old cliché goes, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, when it comes to these types of situations. I think as the LEC noted, tagging as close to the Point of Harvest as possible improves enforceability, reduces high-grading and increases accountability.

Maximizing enforceability is maximizing a state's responsibility for ensuring it is only catching its quota. Yes, tagging at Point of Harvest or Point of Landing is an administrative burden, but it's a burden that New York, Delaware, Maryland, PRFC and Virginia have undertaken to ensure compliance with their quotas, and make sure that we have full trust from our fishing public that we are making sure we don't harvest more.

I mean I know it's a burden. I think all states having a commercial striped bass fishery should be required to maximize enforceability. If you're not going to, well, as you've heard us, you might even call whine before, we would certainly like more quota in Delaware. You know Robert Boyles used to always bring up good quotes.

I'll just quote President Reagan here, where I would say that this is a trust but verify situation. Yes, we trust our fishermen, but it is good to verify that they are actually catching what we've allowed them to catch. We do trust the great majority of the commercial sector are following the rules and only catching what is allowed, but verification gives everyone confidence that this is the case. The difference between Point of Harvest and Point of Sale, an analogy that I think is appropriate is, your mother tells you clean your room and she is going to check to make sure you've done it.

Point of Sale is like Mom coming, looking in the room and saying, okay, it looks okay, whereas Point of Harvest, Point of Landing is, Mom comes in, walks into your room, looks in the closet, takes a look under your bed, makes sure you've actually cleaned the room. I think I've said enough now, but I really think this should be in the Addendum.

CHAIR WARE: All right, next I have Mike Luisi and then Chris Beal.

MR. LUISI: I agree with John, I can't do anything better than what John just said, so I'll leave it at that.

CHAIR WARE: Craig Pugh online.

MS. FRANKE: Craig, it looks like you are unmuted, but we can't hear you.

MS. KERNS: Craig, double check to make sure your microphone under the audio settings is whatever device you're using.

CHAIR WARE: While Craig is working on that, is there any other comments on this motion from the Board? Does anyone need caucus time? All right, Craig, I don't know if you're still trying. We still cannot hear you. I'm really sorry, Craig, we cannot hear you, and I think given the hour we're going to have to move on.

We have a motion here to remove Section 3.2, so we're going to call the question here. Just as a note, I'm the only Maine person left in the room, so I will be raising my hand for Maine. **All those in favor of the motion, please, raise your hand.**

MS. KERNS: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, North Carolina.

CHAIR WARE: All those opposed.

MS. KERNS: Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, PRFC, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Hampshire.

CHAIR WARE: Any abstentions?

MS. KERNS: Maine, NOAA Fisheries and Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIR WARE: Any null votes? All right, so the motion fails 3 to 10 with 3 abstentions. John Clark, comment on the tagging issue?

MR. CLARK: Yes, I think I sent Emilie some wording that I just wanted to put in the document itself that linkage I was talking about that would be from Option 3.2B to Option 3.33. Just to point out what I said that I would hope that if we do get to the point where we're considering a reduction, this might help the Board, after hearing from the public that we could go with the option that does not further reduce commercial quotas.

CHAIR WARE: I'm going to give everyone a minute to read this and we'll brainstorm the best way to approach this. We may pause on this part, John, and bring this back in August. Just give me a second to read it though. I'm going to recommend we bring this to the August Board meeting, John, and we can decide at that point if this is a motion or if there is consensus.

This will give folks an opportunity to read it as well. Is everyone okay with that? We do have a 5:50 cutoff, which is in four minutes, three minutes. Okay, excellent. We're going to quickly go to total length. Any fast comments on the total length issue? I will just take a moment of the privileges of in-person. Our total length definition is in statute. We can consider if there is a way to change that in regulation. We have many of the parts, but we don't have something like closed mouth in our statute. I just wanted to find out for folks; I know that is important in terms of implementation. That doesn't matter if it's August or October, neither, have a legislative session at that point. Just wanted to tell you that.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR WARE: Okay, I appreciate everyone's patience during this long discussion. We talked about a lot. We made a lot of motions, and we will come back in August with a revised document, where we will consider the document for public comment, and we will also talk about John's language on the screen. Thanks everyone. A motion to adjourn, many hands, excellent.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6, 2025)