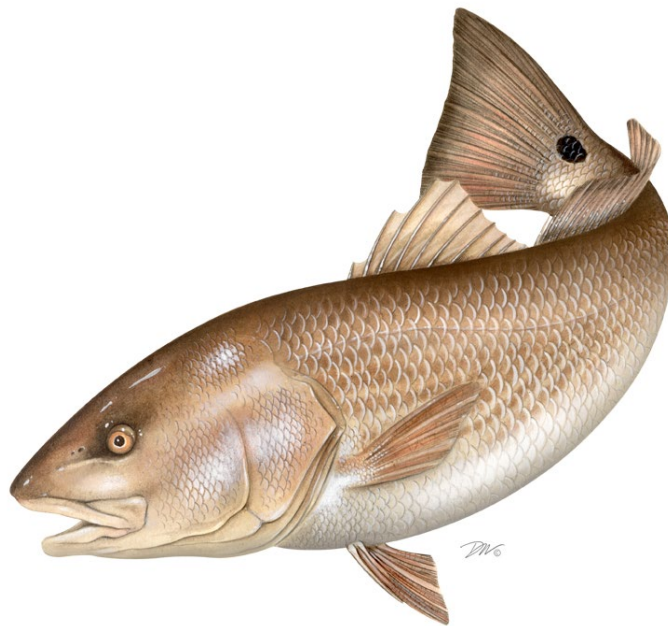


Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

DRAFT ADDENDUM II TO AMENDMENT 2 TO THE RED DRUM FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Modifications to Red Drum Management



August 2025



Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Red Drum Draft Addendum II for Public Comment

Public Comment Process and Proposed Timeline

In May 2025, the Sciaenids Management Board (Board) initiated Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Red Drum to consider changes to the management programs for the southern (South Carolina to Florida) and northern (New Jersey to North Carolina) regions. The management changes under consideration would allow the Board to respond to the 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, which the Board approved for management use in October 2024.

Specifically, this Draft Addendum considers: 1) establishing a process to allow states to propose changes to their regulations in response to new assessment advice; 2) establishing a pathway outside of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission's) assessment process which would allow states to propose new methods to estimate fishing mortality for the evaluation of future regulation changes; 3) levels of fishing mortality states would need to not exceed to end overfishing; 4) modifications to the recreational bag limits and slot limits for the northern region of red drum to address increasing fishing mortality; and 5) updating the *de minimis* provisions of the FMP. This document presents background on the Commission's management of red drum, the addendum process and timeline, a statement of the problem, and management options for public consideration and comment.

The public is encouraged to submit comments regarding the proposed management options in this document at any time during the addendum process. The final date comments will be accepted is **October 1, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. EST**. Comments may be submitted by mail, email or online via the [Red Drum Draft Addendum II Action Tracker Webpage](#). If you have any questions or would like to submit comments, please use the contact information below.

1. **Mail:** Tracey Bauer, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 1050 N. Highland St. Suite 200A-N, Arlington, VA 22201
2. **Email:** comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Red Drum Draft Addendum II)
3. **Online:** <https://asmfc.org/actions/red-drum-draft-addendum-ii/>

Date	Action
May 2025	Board Initiated Draft Addendum II
May – July 2025	Plan Development Team (PDT) Developed Draft Addendum Document
August 2025	Board Reviews and Approves Draft Addendum II for Public Comment
September 2025	Public Comment Period, Including Public Hearings
October 2025	Board Reviews Public Comment, Selects Management Measures, Final Approval of Addendum II
TBD	States Implement Addendum II

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1.0 Introduction

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) maintains primary coordination responsibility for red drum in state waters (0-3 miles), under the authority of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA). The Commission defines the red drum management unit as the resource throughout the range of the species within U.S. Atlantic coast waters of the estuaries eastward to the offshore boundaries of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The management area from Amendment 2 is the entire Atlantic coast distribution of the resource from Florida (east coast) through New Jersey. The management area is divided into a southern region and a northern region. The southern region includes the waters of the Atlantic coast of Florida north to the North Carolina/South Carolina border. The northern region extends from the North Carolina/South Carolina border north through New Jersey.

State water fisheries for red drum are currently managed under Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP; ASMFC 2002) and Addendum I. Harvest of red drum in the EEZ has been prohibited by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service since 1990 (SAFMC 1990).

In May 2025, the Sciaenids Management Board (Board) initiated Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2, with the following objectives:

1. Establish a process for states to propose changes to their regulations to meet the required fishing mortality (F) level;
2. Establish a pathway outside of the Commission's assessment process which allows states to propose new methods to estimate fishing mortality for the evaluation of future regulation changes;
3. Consider the level of fishing mortality level that states would achieve through proposed and implemented management measures to end overfishing;
4. Consider changes to the recreational bag limits and slot limits for the northern region of red drum to address increasing fishing mortality; and
5. Update *de minimis* provisions of the FMP.

2.0 Overview

2.1 Statement of the Problem

The Board initiated Draft Addendum II to consider changes to the management programs for the southern and northern stocks in response to the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. The 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, which the Board approved for management use in October 2024, indicated the southern stock of red drum was overfished and experiencing overfishing, while the northern stock was not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

Amendment 2 does not provide the means for states to make changes to their bag and size limits to meet the required fishing mortality level using any methodology other than tables from Vaughan and Carmichael (2001). Following the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment, Vaughan and Carmichael (2001) is no longer the best scientific information

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available to inform red drum management. However, instead of Addendum II specifying a new methodology, the Board expressed interest in allowing for future flexibility by developing a process for states to propose changes to regulations in response to new information on the stock. As a part of this process, new methodologies to estimate the impact of regulation changes on fishing mortality could be proposed and approved. Crucially, the process proposed in this Draft Addendum would allow southern stock states to address the negative stock status indicated by the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment. The process would also be available for the northern region in the future, if needed.

The Board also expressed interest in proactively addressing a concern that delays to future assessments may delay re-evaluation of red drum management by the states or force the states to use outdated or obsolete methodologies to provide management advice. Current Commission guidelines do not allow any analyses submitted outside the benchmark process to be considered for management use until the next Commission benchmark assessment. As a result, the Board requested development of an alternative pathway to allow for new methodologies to estimate fishing mortality outside of the Commission's assessment process.

In addition, the Board requested Draft Addendum II to clearly define the threshold and target, and the level of fishing mortality management measures must not exceed. It is important to note these changes do not affect the biological reference point (BRP) defined in Amendment 2 used to define stock status with respect to overfishing (30% SPR or $F_{30\%}$, see BRP definitions in Section 2.2 below), nor alters the BRP proposed in the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report used to define overfished stock status ($SSB_{30\%}$). Instead, Addendum II proposes a new definition of the required fishing mortality level for states to not exceed for state compliance with the Red Drum FMP when an assessment determines overfishing is occurring.

Northern Region

Although the northern stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, an increasing trend in fishing mortality was observed in the northern region during the stock assessment. The increased effort observed in the northern region may indicate current management in this region is no longer conservative enough to restrain harvest to appropriate levels. Historically, red drum abundance has been low north of North Carolina. However, red drum numbers have increased in the Chesapeake Bay in recent years, an indication the northern stock may be experiencing a range expansion. Managers and stakeholders expressed concern that red drum's increasing abundance and declines in abundance of other traditional sportfish in the Chesapeake Bay (e.g., striped bass) may exacerbate the increasing trend in red drum fishing mortality already observed in the region.

In addition, current red drum regulations in the northern region vary between jurisdictions, particularly within the Chesapeake Bay, where bag limits range from one fish to five fish per person per day and jurisdictions all have different maximum size limits. Differing regulations for a species between neighboring jurisdictions, especially for those that share waterbodies like the

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Chesapeake Bay, causes confusion for anglers and can lead to enforcement and compliance issues.

For all of these reasons, the Board wishes to consider changes to the jurisdictions' recreational bag and slot limits for the northern region to 1) act preemptively and precautionarily to control fishing mortality before a fishery for red drum in states north of North Carolina is fully developed and 2) provide the northern region jurisdictions with the opportunity to align their differing regulations, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay.

De Minimis Policy

The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in interstate FMPs, like Amendment 2 to the Red Drum FMP, to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species. Currently, Amendment 2 does not provide any specific guidelines for evaluating whether a state should be considered *de minimis* nor does it establish any measures for *de minimis* states.

In 2022, the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board approved an updated *De Minimis* Policy. The 2022 *De Minimis* Policy includes a specific definition for states to be considered *de minimis*, as well as a requirement that an FMP must establish a set of measures for *de minimis* states to implement that would not have to change annually. This draft addendum will consider updating the *de minimis* provisions for red drum to match the 2022 *De Minimis* Policy.

2.2 Background

2.3.1 Status of the Stock

The 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicates the southern stock (South Carolina through the east coast of Florida) is overfished and experiencing overfishing, while the northern stock of red drum (New Jersey through North Carolina) is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. The two stocks were assessed separately, using different methods.

The southern stock was assessed using a Stock Synthesis (SS) assessment model. Stock status is based on the latest three-year (2019-2021 September through August fishing years; e.g., September 2019 through August 2022) averages of population measures. This assessment moved away from the use of calendar year (i.e., January through December) to a fishing year (September through August) definition to align the data sets and modeled population dynamics to the red drum life cycle. Terminal year spawning potential ratio (SPR) is less than the 30% SPR threshold, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing. SPR is a measure of spawning biomass expected under current fishing mortality levels and selectivity patterns compared to spawning biomass expected if no fishing mortality were occurring. Note that $F_x\%$ is the fishing mortality level that achieves a SPR of the same percentage of x , so these quantities can be used interchangeably. For example, $F_{30\%}$ and 30% SPR are interchangeable and represent the same fishing intensity. Terminal year female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was 8,737 metric tons

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(19.27 million pounds), less than the SSB threshold of 9,917 metric tons (21.87 million pounds), indicating the stock is overfished. $SSB_{30\%}$ is the level of SSB expected when the stock is fished at the $F_{30\%}$ threshold fishing mortality level.

A robust, technically-sound SS model could not be developed for the northern stock, so the stock was assessed using a traffic light analysis (TLA). The TLA assigns a color (red, yellow or green) to categorize relative levels of metrics that reflect the condition of red drum adult abundance and fishery performance (i.e., fishing mortality). Although these metrics were not red in the last three years of the assessment, indicating the stock was not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, consistent yellow fishery performance metrics indicated increasing fishing mortality in recent years. Continued monitoring of the northern stock and the increasing trend in fishing mortality is recommended in future years through updates to the TLA.

2.3.2 Status of Management

The Commission adopted [Amendment 2](#) to the Red Drum FMP in June 2002 (ASMFC 2002), which serves as the current management plan. The goal of Amendment 2 is to achieve and maintain optimum yield for the Atlantic coast red drum fishery as the amount of harvest that can be taken by U.S. fishermen while maintaining the static spawning potential ratio (sSPR) at or above the target of 40%. There are four plan objectives:

- Achieve and maintain an escapement rate sufficient to prevent recruitment failure and achieve a sSPR at or above 40%.
- Provide a flexible management system to address incompatibility and inconsistency among state and federal regulations which minimizes regulatory delay while retaining substantial ASMFC, Council, and public input into management decisions; and which can adapt to changes in resource abundance, new scientific information, and changes in fishing patterns among user groups or by area.
- Promote cooperative collection of biological, economic, and sociological data required to effectively monitor and assess the status of the red drum resource and evaluate management efforts.
- Restore the age and size structure of the Atlantic coast red drum population.

The sSPR of 40% is considered a target; a sSPR below 30% (threshold level) results in an overfishing determination for red drum. Amendment 2 stated all states within the management unit must implement appropriate recreational bag and size limit combinations needed to attain the target sSPR, and to maintain current, or implement more restrictive, commercial fishery regulations. All states were in compliance by January 1, 2003.

Red drum state-specific commercial and recreational regulations as of August 1, 2025 can be found in Table 1.

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Table 1. Red drum regulations as of August 1, 2025. All size limits are total length. PRFC is the Potomac River Fisheries Commission.

State	Recreational	Commercial
NJ	18" - 27", 1 fish	18" - 27", 1 fish
DE	20" - 27", 5 fish	20" - 27", 5 fish
MD	18" - 27", 1 fish	18" - 25", 5 fish
PRFC	18" - 25", 5 fish	18" - 25", 5 fish
VA	18" - 26", 3 fish	18" - 25", 5 fish
NC	18" - 27", 1 fish	18" - 27"; 250,000 lbs harvest cap with overage payback (150,000 lbs Sept 1- April 30; 100,000 lbs May 1-Aug 31); harvest of red drum allowed with 7 fish daily trip limit; daily landed catch of flounder, bluefish, black drum or striped mullet must exceed daily catch of drum; small mesh (<5" stretched mesh) gill nets attendance requirement May 1 - November 30. Fishing year: September 1 – August 31.
SC	15" - 23", 2 fish per person per day bag limit and 6 fish per boat per day boat limit	Gamefish Only
GA	14" - 23", 5 fish	Gamefish Only
FL	18" - 27"; Northeast Region – 1 fish per person per day, 4 fish vessel limit; Indian River Lagoon Region – 0 fish per person per day, 0 vessel limit; Southeast Region – 1 fish per person per day, 2 fish vessel limit ¹	Sale of native fish prohibited

2.3.3 Status of the Fishery

Red drum fisheries are predominately recreational. In the last 10 years (2015-2024), red drum recreational and commercial harvest averaged approximately 98% and 2%, respectively, of the total coastwide red drum harvest in numbers of fish from both stocks.

The southern region no longer has a commercial fishery for red drum. Florida commercial harvest has been prohibited since January 1988. South Carolina and Georgia have designated red drum as a gamefish, banning commercial harvest and sale since 1987 and 2013, respectively. In the northern region, red drum are harvested commercially as bycatch in fisheries targeting other species. Commercial harvest of red drum, mainly from North Carolina and Virginia, has varied through time without trend.

¹ Florida implemented these recreational regulations on September 1, 2022, following the terminal year of the 2024 benchmark stock assessment.

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The Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates red drum recreational catch, including both number of fish harvested and number of fish released alive by recreational anglers. It is estimated that 8% of released fish die as a result of being caught, which is used to calculate the number of dead discards. Total recreational removals (number of fish harvested + number of dead discards) in both stocks were high in the 1980s, declined in the 1990s, and have been increasing since the early 2000s (Figure 1). Total recreational removals in both stocks have increased, reaching, and in some cases exceeding, time series highs in recent years. Notably, anglers have been releasing an increasingly large percentage of the total recreational catch in both regions (Figure 1). In the last 10 years (2015-2024), on average, anglers released 85% of the fish they caught.

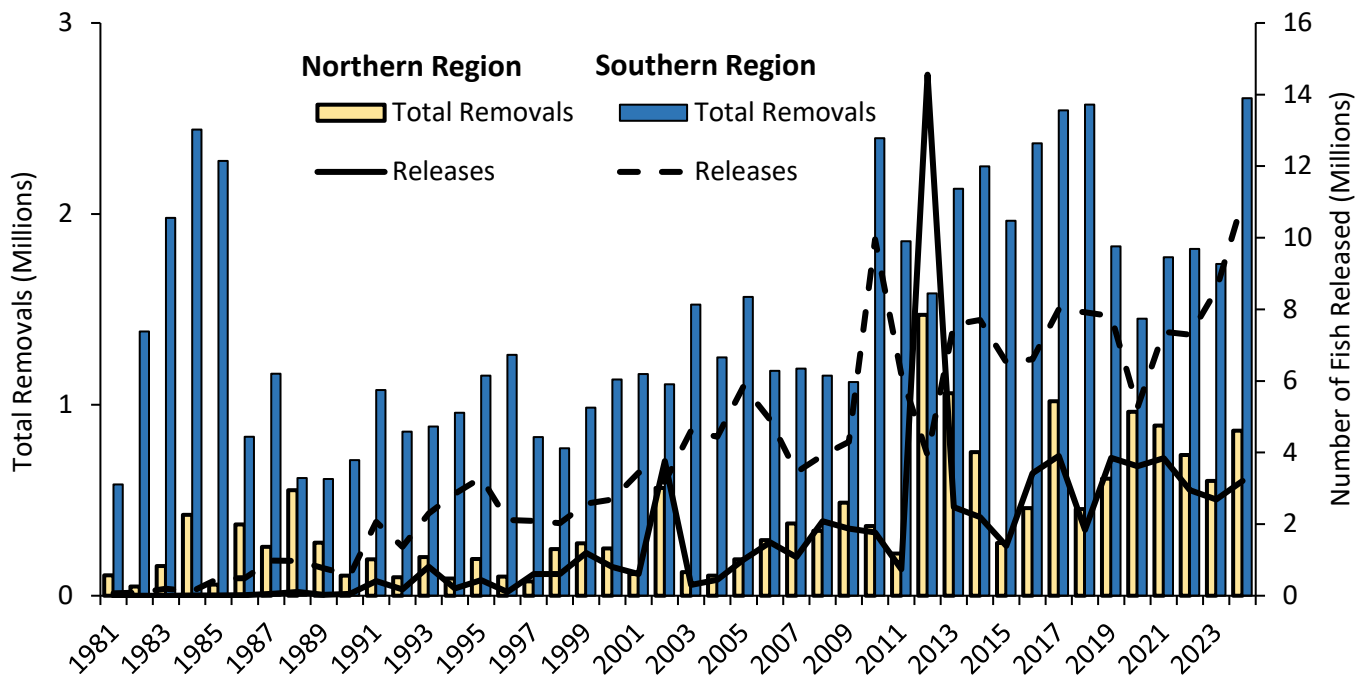


Figure 1. Total recreational removals (harvest + dead discards; numbers) compared to recreational releases of red drum (numbers) by region for 1981-2024.

In the northern region, a majority of recreational removals are from North Carolina and Virginia, followed by Maryland, comprising approximately 60%, 35%, and 5%, respectively, of the most recent 3-year average of recreational removals (2022-2024). In the southern region, a majority of recreational removals are from Florida, followed by Georgia and South Carolina, comprising approximately 43%, 33%, and 24%, respectively, of the most recent 3-year average of recreational removals (2022-2024).

Between 2022 and 2023, recreational removals declined, particularly in Florida, which had implemented more conservative red drum regulations in September 2022 (Table 1). These regulations were implemented after the terminal year of the 2024 benchmark stock

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assessment, so this observed decline in removals could not be incorporated into the model. Following this decline, recreational removals in both the northern and southern regions increased in 2024.

3.0 Proposed Management Options

Draft Addendum II proposes options regarding:

- Alternative State Management Regimes (Section 3.1);
- Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality for Use in Management (Section 3.2);
- Management Program (Section 3.3);
- Northern Region Management Options (Section 3.4); and,
- *De Minimis* Provisions (Section 3.5).

When the Board takes final action on the addendum, there is the opportunity to select any measure within the range of options that went out for public comment, including combining options across issues.

3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

Option A. Status Quo

Under this option, all states must implement an appropriate bag and size limit which will obtain the required fishing mortality level using tables specified in Amendment 2. The tables provide the SPR for a range of bag limits, with increasing minimum size and decreasing maximum size, based on analyses in Vaughan and Carmichael (2001). Under this option, there is no process to change management measures using a methodology that differs from what is described in Vaughan and Carmichael (2001).

The Red Drum Plan Development Team (PDT) notes that Vaughan and Carmichael (2001) is no longer considered best available science nor directly comparable to outputs from the modern red drum assessment.

Option B. Establish Process to Adjust Management Measures

This option would establish a new process to allow states in either stock to propose changes to their management measures using methodology other than Vaughan and Carmichael (2001). This process would typically occur following the acceptance of a stock assessment for management use by the Board, which provides new information on the status of the stock, in order to manage to end and prevent overfishing. This could include liberalizing measures if there are positive trends in the stock condition.

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The process would involve the following steps:

1. States would develop proposals which will include all of the regulation options (i.e., sets of bag/slot/vessel limits) under consideration, using a Board-approved methodology². States would have the option to either work collaboratively (i.e., states work together to set regulations in each of their states that have the combined effect of achieving the required coastwide reduction) or on their own (e.g., each state must achieve the same X% catch reduction) to achieve the catch reduction or liberalization necessary to not exceed the required fishing mortality level, but this would be agreed upon by the region prior to the development of the proposals. States would provide the following information in their proposals: a description of the methodology used to estimate the catch reduction achieved by changes in regulations; sets of measures under consideration; percent change in catch achieved by the individual state and region, if applicable; estimated implementation timeline by the state. In instances where a state has already implemented regulations to reduce catch following the terminal year of the assessment, data from the MRIP would be used to estimate actual reductions in recreational removals. Regulations would need to be in place for at least three years to be used to estimate the actual reduction achieved.
2. These proposals would be reviewed by the Red Drum Technical Committee (TC) to ensure the data and analysis are technically sound. The TC would also evaluate a state's proposed action based on whether it will contribute to overfishing of the resource as defined by the addendum. Public input on proposed measures would be gathered at the state level through state processes.
3. The proposals would be presented to and approved by the Board. Proposals should follow a Board-approved methodology and the region as a whole should achieve the Board-approved percent change in catch.
4. Once approved, states would select one of the options from their proposals to implement.

3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality for Use in Management

Option A. Status Quo

Under this option, estimates of fishing mortality outside of the most recent Commission stock assessment cannot be used unless brought forward during a benchmark stock assessment process if a group would like their assessment to be considered for management use.

Alternative assessments are subject to the same standards, documentation, and process as assessments developed by the Commission, including the Red Drum Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS), TC, and independent peer review. External groups must notify the Commission one month in advance of an assessment workshop regarding their interest in presenting an alternative assessment at the workshop. Any analyses submitted outside the benchmark process may not be considered for management until the next Commission benchmark assessment.

² If not already available, the TC will develop and/or evaluate a methodology to estimate the change in catch that results from adjusting regulations, such as bag, vessel, and slot limits. All methodologies will need to be approved by the Board for management use prior to the development of proposals.

Option B. Establish Process to Adjust State Management Measures, Allowing for Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality

This option outlines a process that would allow states to propose methods outside of the most recently Board-approved regional benchmark stock assessment to estimate changes to fishing mortality. This option would apply to both the northern and southern regions, unless it is otherwise specified by the Board when they take final action on the Draft Addendum.

The methods and analyses used to estimate changes to fishing mortality would be submitted by the state(s) proposing the action and reviewed by the TC to ensure the data and analysis are technically sound. The TC would also evaluate a state's methodology and analyses based on whether it will contribute to overfishing of the resource as defined by the addendum. The Board could recommend additional review by the Commission's Assessment Science Committee (ASC), if additional technical expertise or independent review is needed.

The Board would review comments from the TC and ASC, if applicable, and decide whether to approve proposed alternative analyses for management use if the Board determines that the alternative analysis is consistent with the goals and objectives of the fishery management plan.

If the alternative methods are approved for management use, the process to change management measures would then involve the following steps:

1. State(s) would develop proposals which will include all of the regulation options (i.e., sets of bag/slot/vessel limits) under consideration, using the Board-approved methodology³. If there is more than one state proposing changes, states have the option to either work collaboratively or on their own (i.e., each state must show how their changes impact fishing mortality). State(s) would provide the following information in their proposals: a detailed description of the methodology used; sets of measures under consideration; percent change in catch achieved by the individual state and region, if applicable; estimated implementation timeline by the state.
2. These proposals would be reviewed by the TC to ensure the data and analysis are technically sound. The TC would also evaluate a state's proposed action based on whether it will contribute to overfishing of the resource as defined by the Red Drum FMP. Public input on proposed measures would be gathered at the state level through state processes.
3. The proposals would be presented to and approved by the Board. Proposals would follow a Board-approved methodology and the region as a whole should achieve the Board-approved percent change in harvest.
4. Once approved, states would select one of the options from their proposals to implement.

³ If not already available, the TC will develop and/or evaluate a methodology to estimate the change in catch that results from adjusting regulations, such as bag, vessel, and slot limits. The methods and analyses used to estimate changes to fishing mortality from the proposed action shall be provided by the state proposing the action and reviewed by the TC. All methodologies will need to be approved by the Board for management use prior to the development of proposals.

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3.3 Management Program

The below options specify a fishing mortality level that states would achieve through proposed and implemented management measures.

In Amendment 2, the overfishing threshold is defined as $F_{30\%}$ and the target fishing mortality rate is defined as $F_{40\%}$.

Refer to Appendix I for the initial percent reductions in catch the southern region would need to achieve to reduce the average fishing mortality levels from the end of the 2024 stock assessment for Option A (Status Quo) and Option B (Establish Required Fishing Mortality Level of $F_{30\%}$).

Option A. Status Quo

Amendment 2 specifies states must implement an appropriate bag and size limit which will attain the target of 40% SPR or $F_{40\%}$. Note, in Amendment 2 this is referred to as a management goal (i.e., states must implement management measures to meet this fishing mortality level).

The PDT notes under this option, all states must implement appropriate bag, trip, and/or size limit regulations that are expected to reduce fishing mortality below the target of $F_{40\%}$.

In addition, to provide context on the difference between managing to the threshold ($F_{30\%}$) and target ($F_{40\%}$), the PDT notes Option A, with a level of $F_{40\%}$, represents a more conservative regulatory program than Option B, which decreases the probability of unsustainable harvest and further stock declines. However, relative to Option B, Option A decreases recreational anglers' access to utilize the public resource.

Option B. Establish Required Fishing Mortality Level of $F_{30\%}$

In this option, states would implement management measures which attain the threshold of 30% SPR or $F_{30\%}$ and end overfishing (i.e., $F < F_{30\%}$ or 30% SPR under terminal year fishery selectivity patterns), with a target of decreasing fishing mortality such that it is less than the fishing mortality associated with 40% SPR under terminal year fishery selectivity patterns. The reduction in fishing mortality would be calculated using methodologies developed by the TC that do not incorporate noncompliance and are approved by the Board.

The PDT notes that an implication of this option, if selected by the Board, is all states in the southern management region (SC-FL) would implement appropriate bag, trip, and/or size limit regulations that would be expected to reduce fishing mortality below the threshold of $F_{30\%}$.

In addition, to provide context on the difference between managing to the threshold ($F_{30\%}$) and target ($F_{40\%}$), the PDT notes a threshold of $F_{30\%}$ would represent a more liberal regulatory program compared to the status quo (Option A), which increases the probability of unsustainable harvest and further stock declines. However, relative to Option A, Option B increases recreational anglers' access to utilize the public resource.

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This option would apply to both the northern and southern regions, unless it is otherwise specified by the Board when they take final action on the Draft Addendum.

3.4 Northern Region Management Options

This issue considers modifications to the recreational bag limits and/or slot sizes in the northern region of red drum to address increasing fishing mortality in the region, as observed in the 2024 benchmark stock assessment. To accomplish this, the issue considers two factors:

1. Matching regulations between jurisdictions within the Chesapeake Bay
2. Modifying existing slot-size limits within North Carolina

Appendix II contains examples of the estimated percent reductions in red drum catch achieved for several potential regulation changes for Virginia and North Carolina. The magnitude of reduction in catch necessary to reduce fishing mortality in the northern management region cannot be calculated due to lack of a model approved for management use beyond the Traffic Light Analysis. The reduction achieved by any proposed regulation changes in the northern region cannot be calculated for the region as a whole either, due to low sample sizes and uncertainty in the recreational data for jurisdictions north of Virginia.

The PDT notes an increase in the minimum size limit, which is considered in Options B and C, would have limited conservation benefit to red drum due to their rapid growth rate. Growth rates of sub-adult red drum are so rapid that an increase in the minimum size limit would only provide protection for red drum below that new minimum size for a short period of time within the same season. In comparison, lowering the maximum size limit is expected to have a greater conservation benefit, as it would allow red drum to grow out of the harvest slot and be permanently protected from harvest sooner.

Option A. Status Quo

Under this option, states in the northern region would maintain current recreational management measures (Table 1). No changes to current management measures in the northern region would be needed.

Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications

Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions are defined as Maryland, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC), and Virginia.

With increasing trends of sub-adult abundance and fishing mortality in the Chesapeake Bay sub-region, this option is intended to 1) preempt further increases in fishing mortality; 2) align management across Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions; and 3) simplify management enforcement.

All Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions would establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board specified bag limit of either 3, 2, or 1 fish per person per day and establish measures

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limiting recreational harvest to a board specified slot-size limit between 18" and 26" (e.g., 18"-26", 19"-26", 18"-25", or 19"-25").

Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications

Considering North Carolina's current regulation permits 1 fish per person per day from 18" to 27", any reductions to fishing mortality in the state would most easily be obtained through adjusting the slot-size limits. The below option would establish a reduced maximum size of 26" for the state with the option for the Board to further adjust either the minimum or maximum slot size at their discretion.

North Carolina would establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board-specified slot-size limit between 18" and 26" (e.g., 18"-26", 18"-25", or 19"-26", or 19"-25"). The bag limit in North Carolina will remain at 1 fish per person per day.

3.5 De Minimis Provisions

Option A. Status Quo

Amendment 2 does not provide specific guidelines for evaluating whether a state should be considered *de minimis* nor establishes a set of measures for *de minimis* states that would not need to change annually. Amendment 2 states a state may be granted *de minimis* status if the Board determines that action by the state would contribute insignificantly to the overall management program.

States may petition the Board at any time for *de minimis* status. Once *de minimis* status is granted, designated states must submit annual reports to the Board justifying the continuance of *de minimis* status. States must include *de minimis* requests as part of their annual compliance reports.

Option B. Update De Minimis Provisions

This option would update the *de minimis* provisions in Amendment 2 to align with the guidelines in the Commission's 2022 *De Minimis* Policy.

By definition, states that meet *de minimis* standards (see Sub-Options B1 and B2 below for definitions) would have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species, therefore, those states should not have to change regulations year-to-year to meet FMP requirements. This option would provide a process for establishing a set of measures for *de minimis* states which should provide a minimum level of protection and prevent regulatory loopholes. The Board would review the *de minimis* standard measures after each benchmark stock assessment to determine if they are still providing a minimal level of species conservation.

A state would be considered *de minimis* if the average total landings for the last three years is less than 1% of total landings from its respective management region. The PRT and/or the TC would recommend commercial (if applicable) and recreational measures for *de minimis* states. The Board would review the recommendation made by the PRT and/or TC and approve the *de*

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minimis measures. All *de minimis* states within a management region would implement their respective *de minimis* measures, unless more restrictive regulations are already in place. Other guidelines in Amendment 2, including that states must include *de minimis* requests as part of their annual compliance reports, would still apply under this sub-option.

4.0 Compliance

TBD upon approval of Addendum II.

5.0 Literature Cited

ASMFC (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission). 2002. Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum; Fishery Management Report No. 38 of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Washington, DC.

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Appendix I

Table 2 below provides the results of the projections from the southern region's 2024 benchmark stock assessment model following the assessment. The information in this table is specific to the southern region and is provided to illustrate what the two management options in Section 3.3 would mean in terms of the actual necessary reduction in catch the southern region would achieve. Note this does not account for reductions already achieved by Florida regulation changes implemented immediately after the terminal year of the assessment, in September 2022.

Table 2. The percent reductions in catch the southern region would achieve to reduce the 2019-2021 average fishing mortality (F) levels from the end of the 2024 stock assessment for Section 3.3 Option A (Status Quo) and Option B (Establish Required Fishing Mortality Level of $F_{30\%}$). Catch is defined as total harvest plus dead discards.

Option		Projected Age-2 Fishing Mortality (F)	Catch Reduction Needed from 2019-2021 Average F Catch
Option A (Status Quo)	$F_{40\%}$	0.301	28.1%
Option B	$F_{30\%}$	0.396	14.4%
2019-2021 Average F		0.526	-

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Appendix II

This appendix contains estimates of the reduction in recreational removals (harvest + dead discards) of red drum for Virginia and North Carolina only, based on a selection of example regulation changes. The example regulation changes provided in this appendix should only be used as a reference for how specific regulation changes may impact recreational removals in only North Carolina and Virginia. How changes to regulations in North Carolina and/or Virginia may impact recreational removals for the entire northern region will differ from the results in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Estimates of the percent reduction in red drum removals in Virginia for several examples of changes to Virginia's recreational bag limit and/or slot limit. Current red drum regulations in Virginia are provided in the first row.

Bag limit	Slot Limit (TL)	Percent Reduction
3	18" – 26"	0% (Current Regulations)
3	18" – 25"	2.9%
3	19" – 26"	5.3%
3	19" – 25"	8.2%
2	18" – 26"	14.1%
1	18" – 26"	29.1%

Table 4. Estimates of the percent reduction in red drum removals in North Carolina for several examples of changes to North Carolina's recreational slot limit. Current red drum regulations in North Carolina are provided in the first row.

Bag Limit	Slot Limit (TL)	Percent Reduction
1	18" – 27"	0% (Current Regulations)
1	18" – 26"	3.1%
1	18" – 25"	8.7%
1	19" – 27"	3.6%
1	19" – 26"	5.5%
1	19" – 25"	11.1%