



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## MAFMC & ASMFC Joint Meeting Summary

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*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

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MAFMC & ASMFC ISFMP Policy Board, Bluefish  
Board, and Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea  
Bass Board  
August 12 & 13, 2025

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### Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met August 12-14, 2023, in Annapolis, MD. As part of the meeting the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board), Bluefish Management Board (Board), and Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board), met jointly with the Council to take action and discuss a number of issues. The summaries of those meetings follow.

Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available at <https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/august-2025>.

## **MAFMC & INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 12, 2025)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) met jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) to review draft conceptual alternatives/options and preliminary analysis for the [Draft Recreational Sector Separation Amendment](#). This amendment considers options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from other recreational fishing modes, as well as options related to for-hire permit and reporting requirements. The Policy Board and Council removed two approaches from further consideration:

- 1) Separate allocations under recreational sector separation – These options were removed due to concerns about extending the amendment timeline and adding complexity to the fishery management plans, as well as concerns about uncertainty in the mode-specific data that would inform separate allocations.
- 2) Temporary limitations on the ability to renew inactive federal for-hire permits – This conceptual alternative/option was removed due to concerns it would not address the needs of this action and permit inactivity can be driven by regional and temporal variations in availability.

The Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team (FMAT/PDT) will continue to develop a draft range of alternatives/options for the remaining approaches for tentative Policy Board and Council approval in December.

The Policy Board and Council also received an update on a plan for developing a white paper on recreational data collection issues previously removed from this amendment. The purpose of the white paper is to clarify the relevant problem statements and objectives, and to assess the feasibility of various approaches for addressing concerns with recreational data collection and use. It is anticipated the white paper will be developed in 2026, with tentative plans to present a draft outline to the Policy Board and Council in early 2026.

### ***Motions***

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to remove separate allocation alternatives from issue 1 from further development.**

Policy Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid.

Council: Risi/Hueth

#### **Motion to Substitute**

**Move to substitute to remove only separate allocation sub-alternative b from issue 1, Sector Separation.**

Policy Board: Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Batsavage.

Council: Wong/Beckwith (5 in favor, 10 opposed)

Motion to substitute fails for lack of Council majority.

### **Main Motion**

#### **Move to remove separate allocation alternatives from issue 1 from further development.**

Policy Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion carries (12 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 abstention, 1 null).

Council: Risi/Hueth (10 in favor, 5 opposed)

Motion carries.

#### **Move to remove from further consideration alternative 4 (temporary limitations on renewing inactive permits) from issue 2 (for-hire permitting and reporting).**

Policy Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries by consent.

Council: Grist/Risi. Motion carries by consent.

Motion carries.

### **MAFMC & ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 12, 2025)**

#### ***Meeting Summary***

The Commission's Bluefish Management Board met jointly with the Council to set 2026-2027 specifications and recreational measures for bluefish. The [2025 management track assessment for bluefish](#) concluded overfishing was not occurring in 2024, and while the stock was not overfished, it has not yet fully rebuilt to the biomass target reference point. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 89% of the biomass target. The stock is projected to be rebuilt in 2025; however, since this is a projection, the stock is not considered rebuilt until a future stock assessment determines the rebuilding target has been achieved.

Based on the Scientific and Statistical Committee's (SSC's) recommendation, the Board and Council approved an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 44.61 million pounds for 2026 and 45.41 million pounds for 2027. Under the allocations specified in the fishery management plan, 86% of the ABC is allocated to the recreational sector and 14% to the commercial sector. After lengthy discussion, the Board and Council adopted management uncertainty buffers of 25% for the commercial sector and 30% for the recreational sector. These buffers, applied to the sector-specific annual catch limits (ACLs) to derive the annual catch targets (ACTs), are intended to prevent management volatility and ensure the continued rebuilding of the stock. Board and Council members also noted the upcoming changes to the Marine Recreational Information Program estimates are a significant source of uncertainty. After applying the buffers and accounting for expected discards, the Board and Council adopted a commercial quota of 4.66 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit (RHL) of 22.02 million pounds for 2026 and a commercial quota of 4.75 million pounds and an RHL of 22.50 million pounds for 2027. Compared to 2025, these values represent increases of approximately 50% for the commercial quota and 40% for the RHL.

Recreational measures for bluefish were also modified for 2026 and 2027, with the private recreational bag limit increasing from 3 to 5 fish and the for-hire bag limit increasing from 5 to 7 fish.

	Commercial Quota <i>millions of pounds</i>			Recreational Harvest Limit <i>millions of pounds</i>		
Bluefish	2025	2026	2027	2025	2026	2027
	3.03	4.66	4.75	15.70	22.02	22.50

### **Motions**

#### **Main Motion**

Move to adopt the following specifications for bluefish based on the Council's rebuilding plan and SSC recommended ABCs:

- For 2026, the recreational ACL = 38.36 mil lb., ACT = 26.85 mil lb. and the RHL = 22.02 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.25 mil lb., ACT = 4.68 mil lb. and the commercial quota = 4.66 mil lb.
- For 2027, the recreational ACL = 39.05 mil lb., ACT = 27.34 mil lb. and the RHL = 22.50 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.36 mil lb., ACT = 4.77 mil lb. and the commercial quota = 4.75 mil lb.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Ms. Meserve.

Council: Batsavage/Grist

Motion substituted.

#### **Motion to Substitute**

Move to substitute the following specifications for bluefish:

- For 2026, the ABC = 44.61 mil lb., the recreational ACL = 38.36 mil lb., ACT = 36.45 mil lb., and the RHL = 31.61 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.25 mil lb., ACT = 6.25 mil lb., and the commercial quota = 6.22 mil lb.
- For 2027, the ABC = 45.41 mil lb., the recreational ACL = 39.05 mil lb., ACT = 37.10 mil lb., and the RHL = 32.26 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.36 mil lb., ACT = 6.36 mil lb. and the commercial quota = 6.34 mil lb.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid.

Council: Gwin/Risi

Motion to substitute fails for lack of Council majority.

#### **Main Motion**

Move to adopt the following specifications for bluefish based on the Council's rebuilding plan and SSC recommended ABCs:

- For 2026, the recreational ACL = 38.36 mil lb., ACT = 26.85 mil lb. and the RHL = 22.02 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.25 mil lb., ACT = 4.68 mil lb. and the commercial quota = 4.66 mil lb.
- For 2027, the recreational ACL = 39.05 mil lb., ACT = 27.34 mil lb. and the RHL = 22.50 mil lb. The commercial ACL = 6.36 mil lb., ACT = 4.77 mil lb. and the commercial quota = 4.75 mil lb.

Board: Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion carries (14 in favor, 2 opposed). Roll Call: In Favor – RI, MA, NC, NOAA, NY, MD, VA, ME, DE, CT, PRFC, NH, GA, SC; Opposed – NJ, FL.

Council: Batsavage/Grist (12 in favor, 2 opposed)

Motion carries.

#### **Main Motion**

Move to adopt state and federal waters recreational measures for bluefish of a 5-fish bag limit for private anglers and a 7-fish bag limit for for-hire anglers in 2026 and 2027. This also includes

**conservation equivalency measures for Georgia state waters, which includes a 15 fish bag limit, minimum size of 12 inches, and a closed season of March 1st through April 30th.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Nowalsky.

Council: Beckwith/Hueth

Motion amended.

#### **Motion to Amend**

**Move to amend to delete “for private anglers and a 7-fish bag limit for for-hire anglers.”**

Board: Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes (12 in favor, 4 opposed). Roll Call: In favor – MA, NC, MD, VA, DE, SC, CT, FL, ME, NH, PRFC, GA; Opposed – RI, NJ, NY, NOAA.

Council: Cimino/Wong (7/8/0)

Motion to amend fails for lack of Council majority.

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to adopt state and federal waters recreational measures for bluefish of a 5-fish bag limit for private anglers and a 7-fish bag limit for for-hire anglers in 2026 and 2027. This also includes conservation equivalency measures for Georgia state waters, which includes a 15 fish bag limit, minimum size of 12 inches, and a closed season of March 1st through April 30th.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Nowalsky. Motion carries (10 in favor, 4 opposed, 2 null). Roll Call: In Favor – RI, NJ, VA, NY, NOAA, NC, NH, GA, PRFC, ME; Opposed – MA, CT, FL, SC; Null – MD, DE

Council: Beckwith/Hueth (14/0/0)

Motion carries.

#### **ASMFC BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 12, 2025)**

##### ***Meeting Summary***

Under Board action only, the Board reviewed and approved the Bluefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review for the 2024 fishing year and state compliance reports. *De minimis* requests were approved for Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia.

##### ***Motions***

**Move to approve the Bluefish FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year, state compliance reports, and de minimis requests from Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia.**

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Kaelin. Motion passes without objection.

#### **MAFMC & ASMFC SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 13, 2025)**

##### ***Meeting Summary***

The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board met jointly with the Council to set 2026-2027 specifications and commercial measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The table below summarizes commercial quotas and RHLs for all three species (2025 values are provided for comparison purposes). The Council will forward its recommendations to NOAA Fisheries for final approval, while the Commission’s actions for state waters are final. See the sections below the table for additional details about the recommendations for each species.

	Commercial Quota <i>millions of pounds</i>			Recreational Harvest Limit <i>millions of pounds</i>		
	2025	2026	2027	2025	2026	2027
<b>Summer Flounder</b>	8.79	12.78	12.78	6.35	8.79	8.79
<b>Scup</b>	19.54	17.70	15.57	12.31	13.17	11.58
<b>Black Sea Bass</b>	5.00	7.83	7.83	6.27	8.14	8.14

### Summer Flounder 2026-2027 Specifications

The [2025 management track assessment](#) found summer flounder was not overfished and overfishing was no longer occurring in 2024. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 83% of the biomass target. The Board and Council considered varying ABC limits as well as a constant ABC across 2026-2027. After reviewing the SSC's and Council staff's recommendations regarding both approaches, the Board and Council selected the SSC-recommended constant ABC approach. This results in an ABC of 30.01 million pounds for both years and represents a 55% increase compared to the 2025 ABC.

Under the commercial/recreational allocations specified in the fishery management plan, 55% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector and 45% is allocated to the recreational sector. During the discussion, the Board and Council highlighted the large volatility in summer flounder ABCs over the past decade where sharp increases have often been followed by sharp decreases, the continued below average recruitment, and concerns about management uncertainty and stability. After much discussion, the Board and Council adopted a 12% management uncertainty buffer for both sectors to be deducted from the sector-specific ACL to derive the ACT.

After accounting for the management uncertainty buffer and each sector's expected dead discards, the Board and Council adopted a commercial quota of 12.78 million pounds and an RHL of 8.79 million pounds for 2026 and 2027. The Board and Council agreed no changes are needed to the commercial management measures, which include a 14" minimum fish size, minimum mesh size (5.5" diamond or 6.0" square mesh), and mesh exemption programs. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the Board and Council joint meeting in December 2025.

### Scup 2026-2027 Specifications

The [2025 management track assessment](#) found scup was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be more than three times the biomass target. For 2026, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 42.09 million pounds. This represents a 2% increase compared to the 2025 ABC. For 2027, the Board and Council approved an ABC of 37.01 million pounds.

Under the commercial/recreational allocations specified in the fishery management plan, 65% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector and 35% is allocated to the recreational sector. No deductions were made in either sector to account for management uncertainty. After accounting for each sector's expected dead discards, the 2026 ABC results in a commercial quota of 17.70 million pounds and an RHL of 13.17 million pounds. The 2027 ABC results in a commercial quota of 15.57 million pounds and an RHL of 11.58 million pounds. The Board and Council agreed no changes are needed to the commercial management measures, which can be modified through the specifications

process. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for upcoming years will be discussed during the December 2025 Board and Council meeting.

### **Black Sea Bass 2026-2027 Specifications**

The [2025 management track assessment](#) found black sea bass was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2024. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be about 2.84 times the biomass target. The Board and Council approved an ABC of 21.34 million pounds for both 2026 and 2027. This represents a 28% increase compared to the ABC implemented for 2024-2025.

Under the commercial/recreational allocations specified in the fishery management plan, 45% of the ABC is allocated to the commercial sector and 55% is allocated to the recreational sector. No deductions were made in either sector to account for management uncertainty. After accounting for each sector's expected dead discards, the resulting commercial quota for 2026 and 2027 is 7.83 million pounds, a 31% increase compared to the 2024-2025 quota. The resulting RHL for 2026 and 2027 is 8.14 million pounds, a 30% increase compared to 2024-2025.

The Board and Council adopted a 5% in-season commercial closure buffer for 2025, meaning the commercial fishery will close if 105% of the quota is projected to be landed prior to the end of the year. They made no changes to any other federal commercial management measures. Recreational bag, size, and season limits for 2026-2027 will be considered during the Board and Council joint meeting in December 2025.

### **SSC White Paper on Separate OFLs and ABCs for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass**

At the direction of the Council, the SSC developed a white paper titled "[Scientific Considerations of Developing Separate OFLs and ABCs for the Commercial and Recreational Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries](#)." The Board and Council reviewed the final white paper and discussed next steps.

In December 2024, the Council tasked the SSC with development of a white paper in response to concerns from commercial fishery representatives that the current process for setting overfishing limits (OFLs) and ABCs creates the potential for overages in the recreational fishery to negatively impact the commercial fishery. The white paper stated that a purely scientific basis for allocating ABCs by sector could be developed. However, these allocations would differ from the current commercial/recreational allocations and would likely change with each assessment update. A considerable amount of additional analytical work would be needed to more fully develop the concepts in the white paper.

The Board and Council agreed the white paper is valuable for better understanding the implications of sector-specific OFLs and ABCs. However, they decided not to prioritize further development of this concept at this time. They noted it may be more appropriate to consider if sector-specific management uncertainty buffers can address the concerns that led to development of the white paper. The Board and Council agreed to consider how to best further consider this topic while balancing other priorities during upcoming discussions on the Commission's 2026 Action Plan and the Council's 2026 Implementation Plan.

## Summer Flounder Specifications

### **Main Motion**

**Move to adopt a constant ABC of 26.39 million pounds**

- **For 2026 and 2027, the recreational ACL=ACT=11.88 million pounds, and the RHL=8.79 million pounds. The commercial ACL=ACT=14.52 million pounds, and commercial quota=12.78 million pounds.**
- **No changes to commercial measures.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Pentony and seconded by Mr. Maniscalco.

Council: Pentony/Wong

Motion substituted.

### **Motion to Substitute**

**Move to substitute to adopt the following specifications for summer flounder based on the constant ABC approach:**

- **For 2026 and 2027, the recreational ACL=ACT=13.50 million pounds, and the RHL=9.99 million pounds. The commercial ACL=ACT=16.50 million pounds, and commercial quota=14.52 million pounds. No changes to commercial measures.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Kaelin and seconded by Mr. Grist.

Council: Grist/Cimino (5 in favor, 9 opposed, 1 abstention)

Motion to substitute fails for lack of Council majority.

### **Motion to Substitute**

**Move to substitute to adopt the following specifications for summer flounder based on the constant ABC approach:**

- **For 2026 and 2027, the recreational ACL of 13.50 million pounds, with a 12% management uncertainty buffer resulting in a recreational ACT of 11.88 million pounds, and an RHL of 8.79 million pounds. The commercial ACL would be 16.50 million pounds, with a 12% management uncertainty buffer resulting in a commercial ACT of 14.52 million pounds, and a commercial quota of 12.78 million pounds.**
- **No changes to commercial measures.**

Board: Motion by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion carries (9 in favor, 2 opposed). Roll Call: In Favor – RI, NJ, MD, MA, NOAA, NC, PRFC, CT, DE; Opposed – VA, NY.

Council: Batsavage/Cimino (11 in favor, 4 opposed).

Motion to substitute carries.

### **Main Motion as Substituted**

**Move to adopt the following specifications for summer flounder based on the constant ABC approach:**

- **For 2026 and 2027, the recreational ACL of 13.50 million pounds, with a 12% management uncertainty buffer resulting in a recreational ACT of 11.88 million pounds, and an RHL of 8.79 million pounds. The commercial ACL would be 16.50 million pounds, with a 12% management uncertainty buffer resulting in a commercial ACT of 14.52 million pounds, and a commercial quota of 12.78 million pounds.**
- **No changes to commercial measures.**



Board: Motion carries (10 in favor, 1 opposed). Roll Call: In Favor – RI, NJ, MD, MA, NOAA, NC, CT, PRFC, NY, DE; Opposed – VA  
Council: (12 in favor, 3 opposed).  
Motion carries.

### **Scup Specifications**

**Move to adopt the following specifications for scup for 2026 and 2027:**

- **For 2026, the recreational ACL = ACT = 14.73 mil lbs., with an RHL of 13.17 mil lbs. The commercial ACL = ACT = 27.36 mil lbs., with a commercial quota of 17.70 mil lbs.**
- **For 2027, the recreational ACL = ACT = 12.95 mil lbs., with an RHL of 11.58 mil lbs. The commercial ACL = ACT = 24.06 mil lbs., with a commercial quota of 15.57 mil lbs.**
- **No changes to the commercial measures which can be modified through specifications.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Kaelin and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion carries by consent.  
Council: Duval/Gilmore (motion carries by consent).  
Motion carries.

### **Black Sea Bass Specifications**

**Move to adopt the following specifications for black sea bass for 2026 and 2027:**

- **The recreational ACL = ACT = 11.74 mil lbs., with an RHL of 8.14 mil lbs.**
- **The commercial ACL = ACT = 9.60 mil lbs., with a commercial quota of 7.83 mil lbs.**
- **The commercial in-season closure buffer is 5%.**
- **No changes to the other commercial measures which can be modified through specifications.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Maniscalco. Motion carries by consent.  
Council: Duval/Gilmore (motion carries by consent).  
Motion carries.

### ***SSC White Paper on Separate OFLs and ABCs***

#### ***Council Only Motion***

**Move that the Council request (1) that the SSC further investigate the assignment of different CVs by sector (recreational and commercial) using the current allocation splits found in the Allocation Amendment as a way to address uncertainty separately between commercial and recreational catches and associated fishing mortality for each and (2) that the Council request the SSC to evaluate the relative scientific implications of management uncertainty buffers option, versus the scientific and assessment implications of currently setting a recreational harvest target that exceeds the RHL, and potential SSC involvement in such a process.**

Council: Ruhle/Gwin (2 in favor, 13 opposed).  
Motion fails.

### **ASMFC SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 13, 2025)**

#### ***Meeting Summary***

Under Board action only, the Board reviewed and approved the respective FMP Reviews for the 2024 fishing year and state compliance reports. *De minimis* requests were approved for Delaware for summer flounder and scup.

***Motions***

**Move to approve the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP Reviews for the 2024 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* requests from Delaware for summer flounder and scup.**

Board: Motion made by Mr. Grist and seconded by Mr. Gates. Motion passes without objection.