

# Red Drum Draft Addendum II Modifying Red Drum Management

Sciaenids Management Board  
October 2025

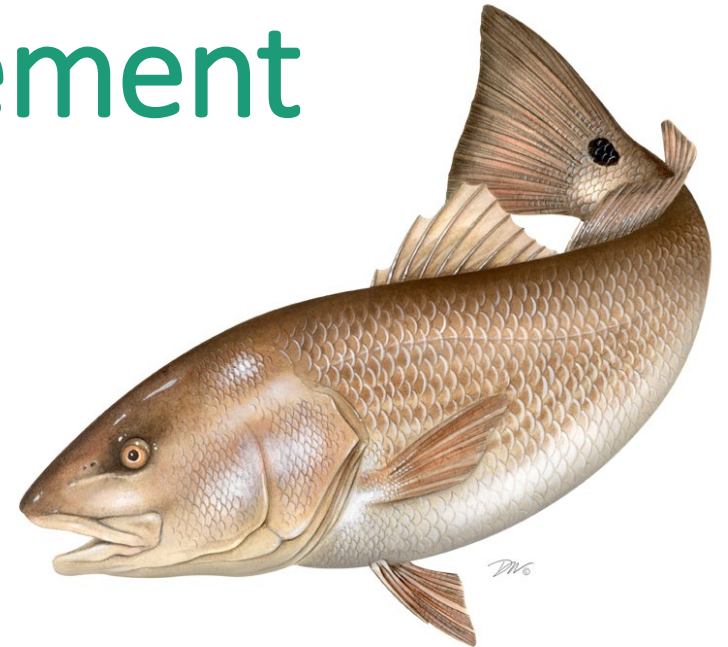




Image credit: Ken Neill

- Timeline
- Background
- Overall Public Comment & AP Discussion Summary
- Draft Addendum II
  - Statement of the Problem and Proposed Management Options
  - Summary of public comment
  - Summary of AP Discussion



| Meeting             | Action                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oct 2024            | Board approved benchmark assessment for management use, tasked TC with analyses to assist with next steps |
| Nov 2024 – Apr 2025 | Red Drum TC met and completed analysis                                                                    |
| May 2025            | Board reviewed analysis and initiated addendum                                                            |
| Late May – Jul 2025 | Red Drum PDT met to develop addendum                                                                      |
| Aug 5, 2025         | Board approved draft addendum for public comment                                                          |
| Sept 2025           | Public Comment Period                                                                                     |
| <b>Oct 30, 2025</b> | <b>Board reviews public comment and takes final action</b>                                                |

## 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment

**Southern stock:** South Carolina through the Atlantic coast of Florida

- *Overfished and experiencing overfishing*

**Northern stock:** North Carolina through New Jersey

- *Not overfished and not experiencing overfishing*
- However, assessment observed an increasing trend in fishing mortality

## Amendment 2 (2002)

- States must implement bag and size limits that attain management target, 40% SPR
- Specifies method states need to use to determine what regulations attain the target
- No flexibility to use any other method



Image credit: MD DNR



# Public Comment Summary

- Public comments accepted through October 1, 2025
- 382 written comments received
  - 377 individual comments
  - 5 comments from organizations

# Public Hearing Summary

- 7 public hearings held in September 2025
- Overall, 187 people in attendance (some people attended multiple hearings; number does not include state staff, Commissioners/Proxies, or ASMFC staff)
- Total of 34 comments at the public hearings

# Public Comment Summary: Other

- 14 comments did not support taking any management action
  - Observations of high red drum abundance in Georgia
  - Concern that restrictions will never be lifted
- 74 comments expressed general concern about the red drum population and support for taking management action to conserve/protect red drum
  - Support for prohibiting or limiting the targeting of mature spawning red drum and/or close known breeding areas in the falls
  - Recommendation to implement a moratorium
  - Support for lowering the 5-fish bag limits in GA and PRFC
- Issues other than changes to regs need to be addressed for red drum



# Public Comment Summary: Other

- Support for reg. changes also for the commercial and/or for-hire fisheries
- Highlighting the financial importance of red drum
- Recommendations of:
  - Research into mortality rates of red drum due to improper tackle
  - Encouraging the fishing community to submit their observations to bridge the gap between data and lived experience
  - To look into the use of Bayesian or hierarchical models for red drum
- Disagreement with regulations to allow the public to keep fish smaller than 20 inches. People will keep fewer fish if they can take home larger fish

# Advisory Panel Summary

- Met on October 8, 2025
- 4 members in attendance: 2 from VA & 2 from NC
- The AP noted at the beginning that they didn't feel comfortable commenting on any Southern region-specific issues.



# AP Discussion Summary: Other

- Individual AP comments in regard to observations of red drum in Chesapeake Bay:
  - 1 AP member has observed an influx of trophy-sized fish, with keeper fish being harder to find
  - 1 AP member has observed decent numbers of puppy drum
  - 1 AP member noted that red drum abundance in the Bay is highly episodic
- 1 AP member did not believe there are competing fisheries for striped bass and red drum in the Bay – instead, more recreational fishermen are targeting red drum now due to declines in large croaker abundance

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



# Section 3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

*Would apply to both northern and southern regions*



## 3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

### *Statement of the Problem*

- The methodology in Amendment 2 which states would use to determine regulations that attain the fishing mortality goal is no longer the best scientific information available after the most recent assessment
- The Board has expressed interest in allowing for flexibility in the future, instead of specifying a new methodology
- Purpose is to provide southern region states with the tools to be able to address negative stock status

## 3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

### *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**: No process to change management measures using a methodology that differs from Amendment 2
- **Option B. Establish Process to Adjust Management Measures**
  - Typically occur following the acceptance of a stock assessment for management use by the Board, to end and prevent overfishing

## 3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

### *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**: No process to change management measures using a methodology that differs from Amendment 2
- **Option B. Establish Process to Adjust Management Measures**
  - States develop proposals → TC review → Board review → States implement regs
  - If a state has already implemented regs to reduce catch following the last year of an assessment, data from MRIP could be used to estimate actual reductions achieved.
  - Regs must be in place for at least 3 years before catch reduction can be calculated



# 3.1 Alternative State Management Regimes

## *Public Comments*

|                      | Option A | Option B |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Organization Letters | 0        | 4        |
| Individual Comments  | 0        | 99       |
| Public Hearings      | 0        | 13       |
| Total                | 0        | 116      |

- **Option A. Status Quo**: No comments expressed support for Option A
- **Option B. Establish Process to Adjust Management Measures**
  - All comments supported Option B.
  - Will modernize red drum management and allow states flexibility to select measures that account for local preferences

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

*May apply to both northern and southern stocks*

## 3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate F

### *Statement of the Problem*

- Proactively address a concern that delays to future assessments may:
  - Delay re-evaluation of red drum management by the states
  - Force states to use outdated or obsolete methodologies to provide management advice
- Current Commission guidelines do not allow analyses submitted outside the Commission's assessment process to be considered for management use until next Commission benchmark assessment



## 3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate F

### *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**

- Current guidelines say outside assessments should be brought forward during a Commission benchmark stock assessment if a group would like their assessment to be considered for management. Alternative assessments are subject to same standards, documentation, and process as Commission assessments, including SAS, TC, and independent peer review

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

## 3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate F

### *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**
- **Option B. Establish Process to Adjust State Management Measures, Allowing for Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality**
  - Process would allow states to propose methods other than the most recent Board-approved regional benchmark stock assessment to estimate fishing mortality and be used in management
  - States submit analyses to TC → TC reviews → Board reviews to approve for management use
  - Board can recommend additional review by the Assessment Science Committee

## 3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate F

### *Public Comments*

|                      | Option A | Option B |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Organization Letters | 2        | 2        |
| Individual Comments  | 95       | 5        |
| Public Hearings      | 13       | 0        |
| Total                | 110      | 7        |

#### Option A. Status Quo

- Majority of comments were in favor of status quo

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

- Several comments were in favor of Option B.



## 3.2 Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate F

### *Public Comments*

- **Option A. Status Quo**

- Comments expressed support for any new assessment methods undergoing rigorous review with the current process, to make sure transparency and consistency is maintained among regional partners

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

- Comments pointed towards the review by the TC and ASC, which would mirror the rigor of a formal peer review to ensure alternative methods are technically sound, while still improving timeliness and flexibility



## Section 3.3 Management Program

*May apply to both northern and southern stocks*



## 3.3 Management Program

### *Statement of the Problem*

- Request from the Board to define the level of fishing mortality management measures must not exceed as  $F_{30\%}$
- Will not impact the biological reference points in Amendment 2



Image credit: GADNR, Chris Kalinowsky



## 3.3 Management Program

### *Proposed Management Options*

Specifies a fishing mortality level which states would need to achieve through proposed and implemented regulations

- **Option A. Status Quo**: States must implement an appropriate bag and size limit which will attain the target of 40% SPR or  $F_{40\%}$
- **Option B**. Establish Required Fishing Mortality Level of 30% SPR or  $F_{30\%}$

*May apply to both northern and southern stocks*

# 3.3 Management Program

## *Public Comments*

|                      | Option A | Option B |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Organization Letters | 5        | 1        |
| Individual Comments  | 267      | 1        |
| Public Hearings      | 23       | 0        |
| Total                | 295      | 2        |

### Option A. Status Quo

- Majority of comments in support of maintaining 40% SPR

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

- Several comments supported Option B

# 3.3 Management Program

## *Public Comments*

- **Option A. Status Quo**

- 40% provides increased probability of conservation of red drum, going any lower is not supportable. Need to keep future abundance in mind.
- Need to aggressively and proactively address problem of declining fish stocks instead of shifting goal posts, especially with increasing fishing pressure from increasing coastal population
- Want red drum abundance to rebound as quickly as possible

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

- $F_{30\%}$  still ends overfishing, and the need to manage to 40% is punitive to the southern region
- Lack of stock-recruitment relationship, recruitment influenced more by environmental variables than SSB
- Problems can be addressed through angler advocacy and cooperative partnership with state management authorities



## 3.3 Management Program

### *AP Comments*

- 1 AP member abstained from a recommendation, but expressed agreement with a public comment in favor of Option B – environmental conditions are more responsible for variability in recruitment of red drum, over red drum's SSB due to the lack of a stock-recruitment relationship in red drum
- 2 AP members supported Option A – concern about shifting the baseline

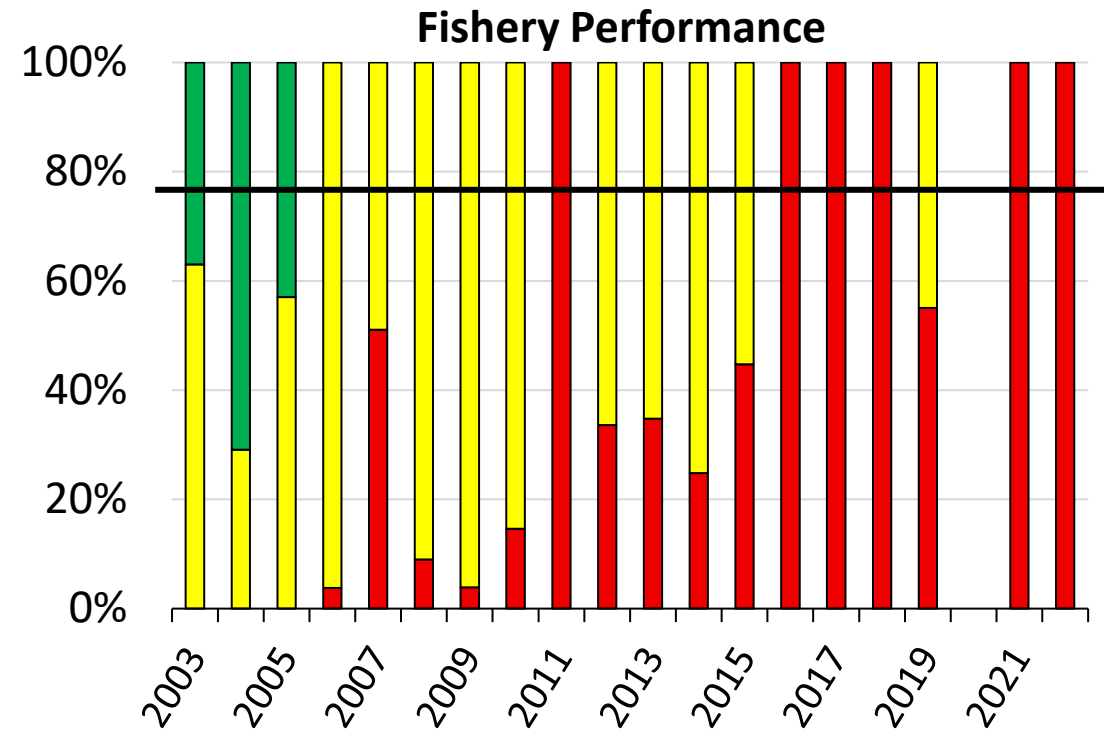
# Section 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

*Would apply to only the northern stock*

## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Statement of the Problem*

- Current management may no longer be appropriate to constrain harvest to appropriate levels
- Concern with increased numbers of red drum observed in the Chesapeake Bay in recent years + declining abundance of traditional Chesapeake Bay sportfish





## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**: No required changes to current management measures in Northern region
- **Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications**
  - 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 limiting recreational harvest to a Board-specified slot size limit between 18" and 26".
- **Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications**
  - North Carolina would establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board-specified size limit between 18" and 26".

## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Public Comments*

|                      | Option A | Option B | Option C |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Organization Letters | 0        | 2        | 1        |
| Individual Comments  | *        | 96       | 94       |
| Public Hearings      | *        | 14       | 6        |
| Total                | *        | 112      | 101      |

#### Option A. Status Quo

- Several commenters supported status quo for North Carolina specifically

#### Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications &

#### Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications

- Many commenters expressed support in modifying Chesapeake Bay red drum regs and changes to the NC slot

## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Public Comments*

- **Option A. Status Quo**

- Support for status quo for North Carolina specifically
- Commenters didn't believe there are any issues with NC's red drum population or enough evidence to say we need to make any changes. NC regs have been in place for a long time and are working
- Increased harvest may be a sign of increased abundance

- **Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications**

- **Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications**



## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Public Comments*

- **Option A. Status Quo**
- **Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications**
  - Concern for recent trends in red drum abundance and fishing effort. Want to be proactive.
  - Support aligning Chesapeake Bay red drum regs and simplifying enforcement
  - Support for anywhere between 2-3 fish bag limit and several comments supported an 18-26" slot.
- **Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications**

## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Public Comments*

- **Option A. Status Quo**
- **Option B. Chesapeake Bay Jurisdictions Modifications**
- **Option C. North Carolina Slot Size Limit Modifications**
  - Many comments did support changes to the NC slot as part of taking proactive action to protect the northern region's red drum stock
  - Suggested 19-25" slot, which achieves 11% reduction

## 3.4 Northern Region Management Options

### *Advisory Panel Comments*

- 1 AP member supported Option A overall
- 1 AP member supported Option A for North Carolina specifically
  - No SPR estimate for the northern stock
  - NC has had their red drum regs for over 15 years
  - Has been observing increasing numbers of adult red drum
- 1 AP member supported Option B.
  - Will align red drum regs in the Bay
  - Supports 18-26" TL slot, 2-fish bag limit





## Section 3.5 *De Minimis* Provisions

*Would apply to both northern and southern stocks*

## 3.5 *De Minimis* Provisions *Statement of the Problem*

- *De minimis* reduces the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species
- Opportunity to establish specific *de minimis* provisions in red drum FMP to meet requirements in the 2022 Policy

## 3.5 *De Minimis* Provisions *Proposed Management Options*

- **Option A. Status Quo**: No specified *de minimis* requirements
- **Option B. Update *De Minimis* Provisions**: 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 stock



# 3.5 *De Minimis* Provisions

## *Public Comments*

|                      | Option A | Option B |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Organization Letters | 0        | 3        |
| Written Comments     | 0        | 98       |
| Public Hearings      | 0        | 10       |
| Total                | 0        | 111      |

### Option A. Status Quo

- No comments in support of this option

### Option B. Update *De Minimis* Provisions

- All comments were in favor of Option B.
- Will modernize red drum management





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# Questions?



Image credit: Ken Neill





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# Atlantic Croaker and Spot Stock Assessment Updates

Sciaenids Management Board

10/30/2025



- Last Board update Spring 2025 Meeting
- SAS completed updated data reviews on 4/28/25 and 5/22/25
- SAS met 7/29/25 to discuss regional model configurations and past model stability and diagnostic issues

## Modeling Subcommittee

- Two models (Mid-Atlantic Stock and South Atlantic Stock) in progress
- A small modeling subcommittee meets on modeling calls every two weeks
  - Last call 10/23/25

## Environmental Subcommittee

- Formed on 7/29/25 to address TORs not directly answered by models
  - Group has met twice: 8/15/25 and 10/10/25
  - Topics: Do/Hypoxia, Temperature, Salinity, Ocean Currents, Extreme Weather Events, Prey/Predator/System Productivity, and Non-fishing Interactions



# Atlantic Croaker Assessment Timeline

- Summer-Fall 2025: Croaker Regional Assessment Model Development
- Winter 2026: Croaker Assessment Workshop
- Winter 2025/2026: Draft Croaker Assessment Report
- February 2026: Review Croaker Assessment with TC
- May 2026: Croaker Peer Review Workshop
- August 2026: Present Croaker Assessment to Sciaenids Board

# Spot Assessment Timeline

\*Contingent on the completion of Croaker Peer Review

- May 2026: Spot Data Due/Data Review
- Summer 2026: Spot Assessment Model Development
- October 2026: Spot Assessment Workshop
- Winter 2026/2027: Draft Spot Assessment Report
- February 2027: Review Spot Assessment with TC
- April 2027: Spot Peer Review Workshop
- August 2027: Present Spot Assessment to Sciaenids Board



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# Questions?