



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

MAFMC & ASMFC Joint Meeting Summary

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

MAFMC & ASMFC ISFMP Policy Board
February 10, 2026

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met virtually February 10 & 11, 2026. As part of the meeting, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) met jointly with the Council to receive updates on several recreational fisheries related issues. The summary of those discussions follow.

Presentations, briefing materials, motions, and webinar recordings are available at <https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/fbruary-2026>.

MAFMC & ISFMP POLICY BOARD (FEBRUARY 10, 2026)

Meeting Summary

Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey

Dr. Katherine Papacostas, Branch Director for NOAA Fisheries Recreational Statistics, provided an update on revisions to the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) Fishing Effort Survey (FES). The FES is a mail-based survey that collects data on recreational saltwater fishing activity, specifically measuring the number of fishing trips taken by anglers in private boats or from shore.

Following a 2023 pilot study that identified potential sources of bias in the FES, a large-scale evaluation of survey design was conducted in 2024. Peer reviews of the revised methodology and associated recalibration approaches were conducted in 2025 and are currently under internal review at NOAA Fisheries. Recalibrated catch time series reflecting the new methods are expected to be released in summer 2026. Delivery of these estimates was delayed by the fall 2025 government shutdown.

Additional information and updates are [available here](#).

Recreational Sector Separation Amendment Workshop Plans

The Policy Board and Council provided feedback on plans for a stakeholder workshop to seek input on draft management options for the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment. The amendment considers separate management strategies for the for-hire and private angler modes, as well as for-hire permitting and reporting requirements for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The workshop was first proposed in December 2025 after the groups reviewed [draft management options](#) and determined that additional stakeholder input was needed to develop the management options. At the February meeting, the Policy Board and Council agreed to hold the workshop in September 2026.

The workshop will convene a small group of for-hire and private recreational stakeholders to provide input on and help refine the range of draft options. Discussions will focus primarily on the existing draft options; however, the Policy Board and Council also directed the Fishery Management Action Team and Plan Development Team (FMAT/PDT) to develop a variation on the draft alternative for regional for-hire management measures prior to the workshop, to be included as part of the discussion. This “for-hire baseline measures” option would create a process for setting regional measures tailored specifically to the needs of the for-hire mode. Private/shore measures would then be developed after evaluating expected for-hire catch, to ensure the overall harvest target is not exceeded.

The groups also reviewed a revised amendment timeline, with final action tentatively scheduled for August 2027. This timeline may be adjusted based on feedback received at the workshop and subsequent direction from the Policy Board and Council.

Recreational Data Collection and Use White Paper Outline

The Policy Board and Council reviewed a draft outline for a white paper on improving recreational data collection and use in the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries. This issue was originally included in the Recreational Sector Separation Amendment; however, in April 2025, the groups agreed to address it separately through a white paper. Council staff developed the draft outline as an initial step, with full development planned for the rest of 2026.

At the February meeting, Council staff requested feedback on the outline and recommended postponing further development of the white paper. Staff noted potential overlap with the ongoing Recreational Sector Separation Amendment – particularly the draft management options related to modifying for-hire permitting and reporting requirements at the state and/or federal levels – as well as anticipated revisions to the MRIP FES. The revised FES methodology will result in re-calibrated MRIP estimates, which may need to be accounted for in the white paper.

Without objection, the groups agreed to postpone further development of the white paper, citing uncertainty about when calibrated MRIP estimates will be released. The project will be revisited once calibrated MRIP estimates become available.

Please contact [Chelsea Tuohy](#) or [Tracey Bauer](#), ASMFC FMP Coordinators, for more information.

Motions

Move to direct the FMAT/PDT to develop a “for-hire baseline measures” option for discussion at the workshop. This alternative would create a process to set regional measures for the for-hire mode that are tailored to the needs of the for-hire mode and that improve viability for operators.

Private/shore measures would be developed after evaluating expected for-hire catch, to ensure the recreational harvest target is not exceeded”

Board: Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Gates (9 in favor, 5 opposed)

Council: Hueth/Davidson (18 in favor, 1 opposed)

Motion passes.