

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Commission Business Session

*May 6, 2026
4:30 – 5:00 p.m.*

Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*D. McKiernan*)
2. Board Consent
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Proceedings from October 2025
3. Public Comment
4. Consider Revisions to the 2026 Action Plan (*T. Kerns*) **Final Action**
5. Consider Noncompliance Recommendations, if necessary **Final Action**
6. Other Business/Adjourn

This meeting will be held at The Westin Crystal City (1800 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA; 703.486.1111) and via webinar; click [here](#) for details

**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
COMMISSION BUSINESS SESSION**

**Hyatt Place Dewey Beach
Dewey Beach, Delaware
Hybrid Meeting**

October 28, 2025

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Commission Business Session.
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of May 8, 2025** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to approve the ASMFC 2026 Action Plan as modified today** (Page 14). Motion by Joe Grist; second by Malcolm Rhodes. Motion passes (Page 14).
4. **On behalf of the Nominating Committee, move to elect Dan McKiernan as ASMFC Chair** (Page 15). Motion by David Borden. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 16).
5. **On behalf of the Nominating Committee, move to elect Doug Haymans as ASMFC Vice-Chair** (Page 16). Motion by David Borden. Approved by unanimous consent (Page 16)
6. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 16).

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ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Carl Wilson, ME (AA)	Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Russel Dize, MD (GA)
Raymond Kane, ME (GA)	Joe Grist, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA, proxy for Rep. Armini (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	Rep. Brian Turner, NC (LA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA)
Matt Gates, CT (AA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Mel Bell, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Marty Gary, NY (AA)	Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)	Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)	Gary Jennings, FL (GA)

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

Staff

Bob Beal	Alex DiJohnson	Chelsea Tuohy
Toni Kerns	Michael Opiekun	Pat Campfield
Laura Leach	Madeline Musante	Katie Drew
Tina Berger	Caitlin Starks	Jeff Kipp
Geoff White	Tracey Bauer	Samara Nehemiah
Julie Defilippi Simpson	James Boyle	Jainita Patel
Alexander Law	Emilie Franke	

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The Commission Business Session of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Ballroom East/West via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Tuesday, October 28, 2025, and was called to order at 10:45 a.m. by Chair Joe Cimino.

CHAIR JOE CIMINO: Good morning, everyone. It's getting a little bit quiet in the room, so I think that is a good sign folks are settling into their seats. If you do have some conversations, please move them out to the hallway, thank you. My name is Joe Cimino; I am the Administrator for New Jersey, the current Chair, and we are going to convene the Business Session, in which it's that time.

It's that time. I don't know that I'm ready for it. I feel like the protagonist of a great literary classic, *The Monster at the End of This Book*, and unfortunately, I am furry, loveable little Grover, wondering why you keep turning the pages, because at the end of this agenda I have to turn over my Chairmanship, and I don't know that I'm ready for that, Spud. I'm going to be looking to you for some advice on how to handle that.

MR. SPUD WOODWARD: Leave with speed and grace, that's all I can say is relish the past and enjoy the fact you're getting to sit here like I'm sitting here, and not fret about some of the details. But you will be obligated for some things for a couple years yet, so it's not completely cutting the umbilical cord, so you can handle it.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, and as I mentioned, we've always leaned on you through these years. I very much appreciated my time. I think that really does, the Vice-Chairmanship is a big part of leadership, and I've always appreciated how much you leaned on me and I lean on Dan, without question.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR CIMINO: With that, let's get started on the Business Session today. I'm going to call us to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR CIMINO: I would ask if there are any additions or changes to the agenda for this Business Session. Not seeing any, we will consider the agenda approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR CIMINO: Then the approval of the proceedings from the May 2025 meeting, were there any concerns or edits to what was? Not seeing any on the proceedings of the May 2025 meeting, so we'll consider that approved by consent as well.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF 2026 ACTION PLAN

CHAIR CIMINO: This truly is one of my favorite items is the 2026 Action Plan. I very much appreciate how much work that staff puts into this, and then of course all the things that we say we're going to do. I will turn that over to, I believe Bob, just to get us started.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I'm saying that for the last time, I'm not sure. The Draft Action Plan is included in the briefing materials for this Session. Staff has pulled this together in talking with Board Chairs and Committee Chairs and amongst ourselves, and looking at sort of what requirements are in the FMPs and across all the other species and stock assessments and data and habitat and Law Enforcement, all the other sections.

What we'll do is we'll have the staff person that is sort of the lead for that subject matter introduce that section. This is your chance to add or subtract or change the work priorities for next year. If you have something in mind that you don't see in here, please raise your hand and let us know, or if you think there is something in here that is not a high

priority and not worth the effort that it may take to accomplish it, that's fair game too.

With that I'll ask Toni to do Goal Number 1, which is Fisheries Management. Toni, do you want to go through the high priorities then stop for questions? Then we'll go to the medium and low after that, if that works for everybody. Take it away, Toni, thanks.

MS. TONI KERNS: Thanks, Bob, and thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to note that there is a possibility of actions taking place later this week that we would add to the document, but I don't want to make any judgments about what may or may not happen at a board meeting later this week, so we have not added those actions to the Action Plan yet and would do so later. Bob.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, just one real quick comment. Sort of the convention of this document is anything that's in bold is a new project, and anything that is not bolded is essentially a rollover or a carryover from next year. It's not that that work didn't get done, necessarily, but some of these projects are ongoing year after year. Focusing on the bold is a good way to focus on the new projects for next year. Sorry, Toni.

MS. KERNS: Starting off with our high priority species, as we said before, and this is not about something being more important than other species, but just the workload that will go into the items in the Action Plan. For American lobster, the Board did not take any management action in response to the stock assessment, so unless something happens in February that action would go away. But we will bring to the Board exploring a management strategy evaluation to identify any possible management objectives and approaches for the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank lobster stock that would be contingent on the Board approval, as well as finding funding to do so. We also will explore facilitating a meeting between the ASMFC Lobster Technical Committee, with Canada DFO lobster scientists

to advance lobster stock assessment scientists across the border.

For Atlantic menhaden, there is the potential to initiate management action in response to the ecological reference point benchmark stock assessment and peer review in single-species stock assessment updates if necessary.

For Atlantic striped bass, we would be conducting the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment and working with the states to implement new management measures to support stock rebuilding if those are approved through Addendum III later this week, as well working with a contractor on the development of the Atlantic striped bass recreational demand model, which is ongoing right now. That is similar to the recreational demand model that we have for summer flounder, scup and black sea bass.

Moving down, cobia. We'll set the 2027 specifications and consider change to recreational measures if that's necessary, as well as starting to initiate the stock assessment that would be presented to the Board in 2027.

Then for horseshoe crab, we are in the process of conducting the stakeholder engagement process, to identify possible changes to the Utility/ Reward /Harvest Policy Functions of the Arm Framework to better align with stakeholder values and consider those recommendations and evaluate state spawning surveys to identify changes or improvements to allow further use in stock assessments.

For red drum, we'll work with the state to implement any measures that get approved via Addendum II, and also, we'll continue to conduct the traffic light analysis and respond if necessary. For tautog, the Board did initiate an addendum to respond to the stock assessment, so we will do that work, and I can take questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Questions for Toni? Jason McNamee.

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DR. JASON McNAMEE: On tautog I wondered if we wanted to add, we talked about trying to implement the risk policy on that one, so I think that might be a good one to add there. We talked about it with tautog, and then may there is a general one, so I'll wait for that section, unless you think this covers kind of the specific and then the general topic of kind of continuing to work on the Risk Policy.

CHAIR CIMINO: Toni, I have a question on that as well. Is there, Jay you probably know this too, a standing Risk Policy group or do we need to form a group? That's an additional question.

MS. KERNS: We don't have necessarily a standing Risk Policy Group. We have worked on the Risk Policy with the Tautog TC in the past, and then we've had a couple people come in and help out with explaining how that policy works. But Katie, if you want to add anything, please do so.

DR. KATIE DREW: Oh, great, this answer is probably not going to be worth all of that effort. But we had a Risk Policy Work Group that was formed to do the initial route, and it has been essentially working through the ASC at this point. We do plan to bring the Risk Policy back to the ASC to work on some issues identified during red drum, and we can, I think continue to move the tautog part of that forward as well through the ASC.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, that's one of our least recognized, but to me most appreciated groups. I think that is great and always worth it, Katie, thank you. I see Adam Nowalsky.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: At the last Mid-Atlantic Council meeting they had discussion about the role of their Monitoring Committees, which led to a motion to add to their Draft Implementation Plan the consideration of development of an omnibus framework to adjust their ACL specifications process in 2026. I am wondering if a complementary possible action or bullet would be appropriate here at

the Commission level, since those were developed jointly, and should the Council decide to move forward with them, I would think we as Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board, Bluefish Board would probably need to respond accordingly.

CHAIR CIMINO: Despite the joint management and what the Councils are required to deal with, I think that is one is associated with Magnuson and what we deal with are a little bit different. This is obviously something the Councils want to address at this point. Yes, we certainly need to, since we're trying to be in lockstep. I'll turn it over to Toni to see what our role is in all of that.

MS. KERNS: Adam, I think what we can do is add a bullet similar to what we see under dogfish, and to monitor the Councils activities on this, and then respond if necessary. I think it depends on what action gets taken and whether or not we need to do it or not through a joint FMP, or if it would just be an FMP by the Council.

That is also something the Board can discuss with the Mid-Atlantic when we meet in December. I assume that we'll get an update on that. This is where the tricky parts happen, when the bodies take action when the other body is not there.

CHAIR CIMINO: Follow up, Adam?

MR. NOWALSKY: No, monitor is great, and I've certainly learned that as long as we've got some placeholder for it somewhere, if we do have to take action it makes it a whole lot easier to enforce. Thank you.

CHAIR CIMINO: The last time I get to make the joke that I will confer with the Chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Council, to make sure that that happens in lockstep. I am told that we have a member of the public that has their hand up. Not seeing that, so go ahead.

MR. MIKE WAINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just had a question about the Recreational Demand Model for striped bass, and sort of the context in which that is being planned to use in the striped

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bass fishery. You know for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass we're using it to estimate expected catch in the following year based on kind of angler's choice.

I'm just curious about sort of the intent of use of the Recreational Demand Model for striped bass, because as you know we don't set specs every year like we do for the Mid-Atlantic species on striped bass. I'm just curious if you had a little bit more context for how the Recreational Demand Model would be used on stripers.

MS. KERNS: Mike, we haven't fully discussed that aspect yet, so we're just working on the development of the model, and then we will get there. I can try to follow up with you later, but I don't have an answer for you.

MR. WAINE: Okay, thanks for that. Just a quick follow up. Is there going to be like an Angler Choice Survey?

MS. KERNS: It's already ongoing.

CHAIR CIMINO: Sorry, I should have pulled this up, next up.

MS. KERNS: We'll move on to our medium low priority species. For Atlantic sturgeon, we will continue to monitor the state and federal responses to the pending Biological Opinion and respond if necessary.

For black drum and the other sciaenid species, we will consider the recommendations from the Plan Review Team on the de minimis status criteria, and then respond if necessary.

For coastal sharks, HMS has Draft Amendment 16, which is the commercial and recreational shark fishery management measures, and proposed rule for electronic reporting that should be coming out. We will monitor that and see if we need to respond. Then as well as have a presentation on the bull and sandbar

shark stock assessments and respond if necessary.

For Spanish mackerel, monitor the Council's development of the Federal Amendment to address catch-level recommendations from the most recent stock assessment, and several management topics that have been raised through the Council Port Meeting process.

For spiny dogfish, the Mid-Atlantic Council and the New England Fishery Management Council have activities that are looking at accountability measures and specification setting modifications. Depending on what those final actions are, the Commission would respond if necessary.

For spot, we will initiate a 2027 benchmark stock assessment and for weakfish we'll initiate the 2028 benchmark stock assessment. I will pause there before getting into the cost-cutting issues.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, Toni, questions for Toni on the low priority issues. Not seeing anything, so I think we can move on.

MS. KERNS: For cost cutting issues, we will monitor and assess the impact to Commission FMPs and stock assessment from changes to the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, including the recalibration results, as well as monitor the activities of the regional councils on the Executive Order for seafood competitiveness.

We will also facilitate the declared interest and voting privileges workgroup discussions, and incorporate any recommendations into the Commission Guiding Document as approved by the ISFMP Policy Board.

We will address challenges of sharing the tracking data for the lobster and Jonah crab fishery across different jurisdictions, as well as organize an opportunity for the states to present and discuss effort on the Northern Right Whale Monitoring and Research.

CHAIR CIMINO: Any questions on that for Toni? Not seeing any.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: For Goal 2, Pat Campfield will run us through Science and Stock Assessment activities.

MR. PATRICK A. CAMPFIELD: Goal 2 starts off with Assessment and Science Committee activities, notably to seek refinements to our Retrospective Patterns Guidance Document. That is something the Committee developed a couple years ago. We've now applied it to both the tautog and menhaden assessments and that called for a revisit and some refinements. The Committee will work on that next year. Moving down again on the Risk and Uncertainty Tool. We're going to change that a little bit and use it on a data poor species. I think we had some discussions earlier this week for maybe using it for tautog, or trying it out again.

Under the data collection activities, notably the SEAMAP and NEAMAP programs, consider expanding the range of the Trap Video Survey further north up the coast to sample potentially shifting stocks. Also, build standardized survey data delivery tools, to expedite the use of those data in stock assessments.

Quite a bit of environmental data is collected during SEAMAP surveys, so we want to do a thorough evaluation of not only what is collected, but identify opportunities to use those data more fully in assessments and research publications. Shifting into the NEAMAP activities. Continue to participate on the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel, to implement plans for wind energy area survey mitigation.

Also, collaborate with partner surveys to modernize from paper to digital data collection out on the survey vessels. That should speed up data delivery to the stock assessments. Then moving down to the next page, partner with the NMFS Northeast Fishery Science Center Cooperative Research Branch to pilot an industry-based survey to supplement current surveys.

That is something the Commission has been involved with for a couple years, and we're going to flip the switch to implement that on the water. Work with the Councils to characterize efficiencies and NMFS scientific support and associated impacts on the fisheries. This is a continuation of projects funded through the IRA support to the Councils.

Then finally in that section, monitor progress in commercial landings, port and observer sampling information exchanges between state and federal partners. That sampling has declined in the last five years, and so we recently had a workshop coordinated by the Northeast Center. We will continue those discussions to try to get as many samples as possible in 2026.

Under Broader Fisheries Research, assist both the Northeast and Southeast Science Centers in identifying opportunities for Commission and state support from sample collection to lab analysis and stock assessment modeling. Under the broad bullet in category of collaborating with university researchers, we hope to bring in some fresh information on weakfish mortality estimates from dolphins, and use that in the weakfish assessment model.

Contingent upon Board approval at the Lobster Board, revisit the need for a Management Strategy Evaluation. Then finally under Ecosystem Based Management and Changing Ocean Conditions. Expanding incorporation of environmental data and analysis into our stock assessment work flows, to better inform stock recruitment and population productivity dynamics.

That is more of a meat and potatoes work, where we have a lot of fisheries data providers, survey data providers, but we haven't worked closely with the environmental data providers, and so to try to get those experts on to some of our stock assessment teams and use that information more in the assessments. Then lastly in Competing Ocean Uses, an MOU has been signed between the Commission and NOAA Fisheries to use offshore energy developer funds for surveys and monitoring.

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That of course is contingent on funds being provided by developers. With that, Mr. Chairman, I am glad to take any questions. For additions, if there is any research for particular assessments or survey information that you all thought we need more of, this would be a time to suggest those.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, Pat. I'm going to look to questions for Pat. I will also say that in dual role as Chair in Mid. I do know that for the NTAP Committee they may be looking to change folks there, since the past Mid-Chair may be a good candidate for us as the Commission's representative to NTAP has now moved to the Council's representative for NTAP, if we need a new Commission member. Any other questions for Pat? I see Jason's hand.

DR. McNAMEE: Back on the Risk Policy piece. I flagged this part, Pat, thanks for having the Risk and Uncertainty Tool in there. I agree with you, I think the hope had been to kind of have this sort of data rich version one further along, and then start to think about it in the context of data poor species, but I think both are true. I don't know if you want to either generalize this line or just add some text to kind of, yes, either way is fine. But just to capture that we still need to work on the kind of more data rich version of it as well.

MR. CAMPFIELD: Okay, thanks for that suggestion. We'll just change that to have both.

CHAIR CIMINO: John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thanks for the presentation, Pat. I'm just curious, it just jogged my mind, because I saw one of the things as being funded by Inflation Reduction Act fund, which I know are going away. With the changes we're seeing at the Federal level, a lot of these are going to cost a lot of money, a lot of these action items. I'm just wondering if you have any idea how much, if there is any way to rate these things, as far as how sure you are of the funding

continuing at the Federal level at this point, or is that still to be determined?

MR. CAMPFIELD: Of course, a critical question, John, so thanks for that. I mean a couple of places we have added, if resources are available, just in case they don't come through. But I might turn to Bob for any more elaboration, including the IRA Fund.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, thanks, Pat. Generally, John, the things that are in here we anticipate being able to fund and support. You know we kind of work as a one-year lag sometimes with our projects, so Fiscal Year '25 money, we just got that or Laura like a month ago or something. We'll have that money for a year carrying forward, essentially.

My understanding of the IRA Projects is that if that money was obligated and the project has been initiated and approved that money will continue to flow. It's not going to be withdrawn on those projects. I think the IRA Funds that were pulled back were not for specific projects yet, they were just ideas that were out there that people had talked about but nothing had started. Those funds were pulled back. But these projects that are up and running, I think we're in good shape.

CHAIR CIMINO: Emerson.

MR. EMERSON C. HASBROUCK: You mentioned a couple of minutes ago about membership or representation on NTAP. I just wanted to remind the Commission that myself and Eric Reid are both also members of NTAP, as well as the NTAP Working Group that is developing the Industry Based Trawl Survey.

CHAIR CIMINO: Adam Nowalsky.

MR. NOWALSKY: I'm glad that you highlighted your dual role as Chairman of the Council. I'm sure it helps facilitate the collaboration between the leadership between the two, so thanks for highlighting that. One of the other Council business

items is they are going to hold an upcoming Indicators Workshop this December.

It's an IRA project regarding Operationalizing, putting into use, Ecosystem and Habitat Indicators, to support Climate-Ready Fisheries Management in the Mid-Atlantic. They identify Council members, stakeholders, scientists and staff to participate in that project. Has ASMFC been invited to that workshop as a member, and if so, would it be appropriate to be included here as well?

MR. CAMPFIELD: Yes, thanks, Adam. I think we will follow up on that. It is a good suggestion. To my knowledge we are not invited or haven't appointed a representative. But we're aware of the project, and have talked with the lead contractor who is developing the indicators, but we'll follow through to make sure we can participate.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Just real quick Adam, we are on steering committees for, I don't know, I think four projects that the Council's plural, New England, Mid and South Atlantic Councils are, you know projects that have been funded through the IRAs money that is going to those Councils.

We are on the Steering Committee for a number of those projects; I just have to check in on this one and recall if we have a staffer on there or not. I don't think we do, but I can talk to the Chair when he has a minute. You know see if we can get on, because based on your description it makes sense that the Commission would be represented.

CHAIR CIMINO: Follow up, Adam?

MR. NOWALSKY: No, thank you, and again, similar to the earlier discussion about Council items, whether a bullet point gets added regarding monitoring and/or participation here. I think it's important that the entirety of the Commission understands that we're tracking

this and the public does as well, so they look at this plan.

CHAIR CIMINO: Very fair. It was great to see some of those resources filled to the Councils. It was a little kind of different that the Commissions were handled so differently in that process. But that is what it is. I'll go to Toni; she has her hand up.

MS. KERNS: Adam, we do have a bullet to keep track of IRA projects in the Cross-Cutting Issues, so I think it is there already. But as you said, we will specifically reach out about the project.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: All right, I think that wraps up the Science bullet. The other thing I should have said up front, I think, before we get into data management is that, you know with the Federal shut down right now, there are a lot of things in here that assumes they are going to open up soon and we're going to be able to keep working.

I don't mean this as a criticism of anybody from NOAA or Fish and Wildlife Service, but the reality of the last time we had an extended closure was that for every week of that closure it pushed back projects about a month. We had a five-week closure, we had about a five-month delay in some of the projects that we worked on cooperatively.

We're a month into this one now, and as far as I can tell, no signs of things loosening up. We may experience some significant delays, such as the recalibration, do the FES work for MRIP Program. That may be, I would think that likely would be delayed. You know we have a lot of pieces hinging on different things with the Federal Government, who is adjust scheduling as necessary, but hopefully they get back to work and we can continue these projects. With that I'll turn over Goal Number 3 to Geoff at statistics and the ACCSP Program.

MR. GEOFF WHITE: Goal 3 is focused on fisheries dependent data for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. This year we maintain the same kind of tasks and language under the Continuing Business and Partnership Sections. But under

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fisheries dependent data collections the first major item is SAFIS, the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System.

One of our big projects this year is to develop the software for modernize and updated electronic dealer reporting. The first bullet here is to facilitate the transition of dealers into that redesigned electronic dealer reporting software, with specific focus on the file validation and transfer to file upload dealers.

We are going to be extending the One Stop Reporting Initiative in eTRIPS, the harvester allocation to add state requirements and expand functionality across Federal permits, as those get implemented. We will be soliciting dealer and harvester feedback on eTRIPS Mobile and online applications, the look and feel, to scope enhancements to the user experience.

How does the software work, how can we make it more functional and easier for folks to use us? We want to expand partner implementation of the eTRIPS One-Ticket functionality that's active in Georgia right now to allow a single submission from harvesters that act as their own dealers currently in a two-ticket system.

We've heard from shellfish dealers and several states that want to move towards that functionality, and again, ease the reporting burden on those entities and work with the partner agencies to do that. Under recreational surveys, we will continue to support MRIP endorsed recreational pilot projects. One of those is an APAIS Catch Card Pilot Project that was supported at the Coordinating Council meeting yesterday, and to monitor and support South Atlantic exploration of state red snapper management. Under data distribution and use, through the data warehouse and our data team, we will provide validated commercial landings data for Commission stock assessments and the SEDAR processes, once a species is in a document. We will incorporate additional partner data feeds

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for the biological data load schedule, and finalize biological queries in the Data Warehouse to make those queries available to the public and our confidential users.

We'll be implementing charter boats, at-sea observer data warehousing for the South Atlantic, they are doing some field data collection now and want to have the centralized piece of that into data storage within our system. We'll be implementing consolidation, warehousing and display of release catch data across the data types within ACCSP.

Really, we store the discard information, the released fish information under mandatory reports, citizen science and observer data separately at the moment, so we need to make it easier to show what has been collected and share that back out, instead of looking in three places. Then we will review the Data Warehouse User Guide Materials and identify necessary updates or additions to those materials or applications.

Finally, under Outreach and Infrastructure, ACCSP will prioritize and implement improvements to our IT hosting scalability to address increased data demands within the scope of available funding. We'll increase outreach via industry publications on the value of SAFIS applications, with specific emphasis on the One Stop Reporting features, and we'll continue to improve the website through content expansion and useability enhancement to create a richer, more engaging worksite that is valuable to our users.

We will discontinue antiquated software obligations to increase the efficient use of ACCSP resources, to maintain vital functionality and meet future needs. Finally, we will document contingency plans for shifting funding availability by working with the Coordinating Council and the leadership. With that I will take any questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Questions for Geoff? John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Thank you, Geoff. One of the points you made where you just mentioned citizen science just had me remembering. Wasn't there a Bill that

passed a few years ago, was it the Fish U.S.A. Act or something, and said that we had to incorporate more citizen science type things into fisheries management? I was just curious. I forget what the wording was exactly, but I'm just wondering where that is.

MR. WHITE: I have not been following that closely, but one of the ACCSP projects the SciFish Application has a couple different pieces through South Atlantic Council that are running now, and we've got projects for Angler Catch, which is a different software application to feed their citizen science information into the ACCSP SciFish Data Warehousing Storage.

There are pathways, and the SciFish Advisory Panel is considering applications to centralize and store more of that information, and make that available to the Stock Assessment Management Process, as necessary.

CHAIR CIMINO: Any other questions for Geoff? Not seeing anything; Bob.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Keep going. Goal Number 4 is the Habitat Activity. I think Toni and Pat are going to kind of tag team this with Toni starting out and Pat wrapping it up, is that right, Toni? As soon as Toni finds it, she'll be ready to go.

MS. KERNS: For the Habitat Committee we will continue to publish Habitat Management Series documents for the Atlantic Coast and we will be presented a shell recycling program and benefits to fish habitat in February and then the Committee will choose the next Habitat Management Series document moving forward. The Committee will also update the state reports on Ecosystem Resiliency Initiatives that are ongoing.

MR. CAMPFIELD: For the next section Leveraging Partnerships, mostly pertains to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership and a handful of new activities for 2026. First is to work with partners to develop standardized

seagrass monitoring assessment and restoration for the resource managers and habitat stakeholders up and down the coast.

Then also on the funding front, protect, restore and enhance fish habitats by supporting conservation projects, both through the NFHP National partnership and through funding available through NOAAs recreational fisheries and Habitat Conservation Offices. We've been very successful in funding over a hundred thousand dollars of projects in recent years from those sources.

Then finally, support ACFHP and its partners in fundraising efforts through a National 501(c)3 and some new staff that has been brought onboard for development, to bring more money to the Fish Habitat Partnerships. That's all, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, Bob and Toni, any questions on this? Not seeing any.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Goal Number 5 is Law Enforcement. I'll save Toni some breath here. There is essentially nothing new in the Law Enforcement activities for this year. It will be their ongoing monitoring of fishery regulations and enforceability of FMPs and their commenting on proposed enforcement issues, as well as partnerships and some real-time tools to more effectively and efficiently monitor fishery activity.

Nothing new there, just sort of care and feeding an ongoing work of the Law Enforcement folks. Happy to answer any questions, or if there is a specific project you think the Law Enforcement folks should focus on, we can add it here.

CHAIR CIMINO: Questions or discussions on the LE portion of this. Not seeing any.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: All right, Goal 6 is Outreach, which is Tina's wheelhouse.

MS. TINA L. BERGER: Thank you, Bob. Goal 6 is about Outreach and Stakeholder Support for the Commission. Under the first bullet on increasing public understanding and support of the ASMFC, we

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plan to publish a revised Guide to Fisheries Science and Stock Assessments that is out on our display table that was published first in 2009 and could use a serious update. We're going to look at revising that and also putting that in a story map format. We're going to look at some additional changes or explore changes to our ASMFC documents, including Habitat Outreach materials.

We're going to continue to do our stock assessment overviews, and focus next year on croaker and herring. We are also going to, later today you're going to hear a lot about the single species and ERP assessments for menhaden, and so we're going to focus some outreach on those two assessments throughout the year.

We're going to explore opportunities to collaborate with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums to get more information out there on fisheries management, data collection and fisheries science, and work with our sister Commissions and Councils and states as appropriate. On to Maximize the use of Current and New Technologies.

We're going to continue to seek improvements to our website, in terms of functionality and accessibility, to documents. We're going to look at trying to develop some videos on highlighting the importance a lot of coastal fisheries, the management process, the role of science and the role of data collection in the assessment process.

A number of maps are fairly outdated. We're using antiquated programs, so we're going to update all our graphics, especially maps on our website. Continue to streamline, we have a lot of new signups to the website Contact Us Page. We receive close to 10 to 15 a week, so we're going to try and automate that more, so it goes directly into a database if possible. Under facilitate stakeholder participation, we're going to continue to work on our Action Tracker web pages.

We've got a lot of comments through those web pages, and I think it has certainly improved our public input on our proposed management actions. As part of that, we'll continue to look at ways of streamlining the submission of public comment on management documents through the customized forms generated on the website, as well as evaluate approach to populating Advisory Panels, similar in ways that we did to the Horseshoe Crab AP this morning, and look at both nontraditional and traditional stakeholders and solicit new membership as necessary.

Under Media Relations and Networking, we're going to continue to develop FAQs, commonly asked questions for high profile species, with the intent to get at the misinformation that continues to be perpetuated through the media on our various management and science activities, as well as develop Fact Checkers to address misinformation in media.

The last thing will be to bring together sort of the State and Federal public information officers, INE folks, either through an online or in-person workshop to discuss addressing information and engaging positive community engagement, and hosting successful virtual meetings. That is all, in addition to our standard activities that we carry out. I'm happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, Tina and yes, Alexander in his most recent update I believe, sent some of his infographics up to us. Hopefully everyone had a chance to see those, I think they are fantastic, personally. I'll just open up the floor, any questions for Tina? I'm going to start with Adam and then I believe Jeff, so Adam, go ahead.

MR. NOWALSKY: Thank you, again, I appreciate your continued enthusiasm for recognizing me during this part of the meeting today. Under the bullet point of Use New Technologies to Further Improve Website Functionality and Accessibility to Management Documents.

Is the Commission required to adhere to the web content accessibility guidelines as an organization

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that is going to go into effect as of next April for some organizations and the following, which would require some reformatting of PDF documents et cetera? Maybe that is completely new, maybe I've gotten way too far in the weeds here with this one. But it is a pretty big deal in one of my other lives outside of here. I thought I would bring it up here.

MS. BERGER: Thanks, Adam, I appreciate that question. So far, as far as I understand it, we are not required to follow ADA compliance issues. However, if it comes to that we will make sure that we will do so.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, thanks, Adam, that's a great question. Even in the stock assessment process we've seen that some of those requirements can add additional responsibilities and effort into how we present that information to the public. Important question, I thank you for that. Jeff Kaelin, you're next.

MR. JEFF KAELIN: Great work, Tina and staff on this. There are a lot of terrific initiatives here. I just wanted to make a comment up on Page 14, relative to the collaboration with the Associations of Zoos and Aquariums. Another aspect of that relationship could be learning from them about fisheries utilization. That zoo food, there is a market for zoo food.

I wouldn't be surprised if some of the species under management here, certainly the Council are utilized by that group for feeding their animals. I think if we could get some information through that relationship about their utilization, not only fisheries management, but the utilization of fisheries stocks that are under management that they're using for food would be an interesting part of that collaboration, I think.

MS. BERGER: Thanks, Jeff, we'll include that in our discussions with them.

CHAIR CIMINO: Other hands, did I see Loren? Go ahead, Loren.

MR. LOREN W. LUSTIG: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak, and thank you to Tina for her report. I've been thinking about the number of nature centers and visitor centers that would be within 20 miles of the Atlantic Coast. Almost all of them being either public or not for profit facilities, and wondering if we could try to establish a really strong working relationship with them, in terms of those centers providing our materials to the public.

MS. BERGER: I think that is a great avenue, and we will explore that this year. Thanks, Loren.

CHAIR CIMINO: John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Thanks, Tina, just want to say as somebody of a certain age that the change to the web page at first was a little frustrating at times, but now I've got the hang of it, it's really great. Just want to say that I really appreciate the news clippings you send out all the time, and I know I send it to all our staff too, they really appreciate those. Thanks.

MS. BERGER: Thanks very much, John. The other thing that I didn't put in the Action Plan but I discussed with some Commissioners is some Commissioners are still struggling with using the website to its fullest ability. We will conduct some informal webinars over the next few months to help bring people up to speed so they are more comfortable utilizing it. We also hope to launch a site-specific search engine, so that if you can't find it through the publication search you will find it through that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Goal 7 is the Lobbying and Fiscal Priorities for the Commission, and Alexander is going to run through that goal.

MR. ALEXANDER LAW: Goal 7 is Advancing Commission and Member States Priorities for a Proactive Legislative Policy Agenda. This section is largely unchanged from last year. Many of our priorities are bipartisan or nonpartisan. A couple things have shifted with the change in administration and control of both Houses.

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The most notable change is the removal of certain bills that were promoted under Democrat administrations, such as RISEE, Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems, which would have relied on offshore wind energy revenue, and the Recovering American Wildlife Act, RAWA. I don't see those two bills moving forward in this Congress, it may change after another election.

But because of the new administration and the hostility towards offshore wind development, while ASMFC has supported RISEE in the past that has been removed as a top line priority. Should the prognosis on RISEE or RAWA change, you know with RAWA they need to identify a pay-for, which they failed to do in multiple years, inappropriate pay-for in multiple years.

Should that change, we will retry with those efforts. A couple of references to energy initiatives and offshore wind development and fishery compensation mitigation efforts were removed from the document. The other notable change from last year is we believe that engagement with Congress and the Executive Branch is the best past forward for resolving our New Jersey, Florida Cares Act Issue, so Bob and I have been working hard on that. Those are the main highlights, happy to take any questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Questions for AI? I mentioned this a little bit during the Horseshoe Crab Board meeting, Alexander, but I really appreciate all the efforts that you and Bob have put forward. I think it's clear that even through D.C.'s challenges we are still seen, we are heard, we are relevant and I think that is incredibly important, so I appreciate that.

MR. LAW: Just one quick note. Yes, as I said in my last Legislative Update at the last quarterly meeting. The Senate Report language was very strong for us, so looking to maintain that is important. With staff turnover within the judicia co offices it is important to get Commissioners up there as frequently as

possible. I know I have some frequent flyers and would love to get some new faces up there, develop new relationships with offices that we don't see quite as much. Anytime anyone is willing to go up to the Hill with me, I welcome you to join me.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Moving on to last but not least, Goal 8. Laura.

MS. LAURA C. LEACH: Goal 8 is Ensuring the Fiscal Stability and Efficient Administration of the Commission. Most tasks are ongoing. I think we put some new ones in. Under the first one, manage operations and budgets. We're going to continue to refine the process for developing and tracking sub-work and contract.

The more money that we get the more sub-contract subawards we're giving out. We just want to make sure that we've got a complete handle on those. We also plan to evaluate the Commission infrastructure, because this is year 15 of being in our new office, our new office, so we want to see what we can do if we need to do anything, painting or and things like that to the office.

Then utilizing current information technology, which changes every day. We're going to continue implementation and improvement of the Commission supervision of cloud resources, hopefully that will prevent another breach, but who knows. We are going to standardize the use of electronic forms to gather data across the Commission departments.

We are going to refine email retention processes for staff that have left the Commission so we have history of communication, and we're going to develop guidelines regarding access to former employee's electronic data for the same reason. We are also going to continue improving technological security using both hardware and software to ensure against potential future breaches. Do you want to ask questions for that or just at the end?

CHAIR CIMINO: End.

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MS. LEACH: Next, we're going to, in the Managing Human Resources we're going to investigate additional options and resources to improve recruitment of administrative staff. We're going to research improvements to Human Resources Management System. We're going to conduct an all-staff team building retreat, which are really well received and really help build teamwork among our staff.

We're going to establish a virtual bulletin board to share staff information, calendar events and resources. Mainly, because we're still a requirement of one day a week in the office and so we need a better way to, we're like ships passing in the night, so we want to make sure that everybody has the same information. Under engaging and supporting Commissioners we are going to reinstate the new Commissioner orientation, so more details to come later and that is it, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIR CIMINO: I think that's a lot, quite frankly. I really do. You know we've been doing this a while and I think for Laura's report that there is a lot of new stuff in there. I think this really proves that we are staying focused and considering the needs of both the Commission, with discussions on how do we help new Commissioners come into this process. I can't imagine just jumping into menhaden, striped bass without any preparation. But also, some of the stuff on the other end of it, as you mentioned, Laura, like data breaches and stuff like that. It's constantly evolving and really appreciate that. Any questions for Laura? John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Thank you, Laura. I'm just curious you mention that all staff have to be in the office one day a week, is that correct? You were thinking how it's been working out in terms of retention, recruitment and productivity.

MS. LEACH: I'll defer to Bob for that answering that question.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: It has been working well. Most staff are in more than one day a week, and with our travel schedules and everything else it is kind of hard to calibrate when people are in or out and nobody is moving around.

I think it's been working well. I think the staff is staying connected to try to bring in groups together quite frequently within their departments, and talk usually on a weekly basis. I think overall it's working out pretty well, and I know that the recruiting and retention, you know the allowance for some remote work does seem to be attractive to a lot of people.

CHAIR CIMINO: John, you good?

MR. CLARK: Yes, thanks, I was just curious, because we have like three days a week in the office. I just want to see how that was working.

CHAIR CIMINO: I will say, I wasn't expecting the question but I do want to say that when I took over as Chair I went to ASMFC and I talked to senior staff and I think, and I've said this on the mic before. I think that we have to move forward and learn lessons, right, including what happened during the pandemic.

This was one of the things, I'm looking to Dr. Drew, because I feel like this was one of the things that I will, as long as I'm here, stand up for Commission staff. But this is something that was really important. We don't live in that area. You know we're here in beautiful Dewey Beach, it's a nice kind of calm commute if you're wandering around here, or where I live in South Jersey. That's not quite true for D.C. I think it's been a really important thing to staff to have that ability. I will say personally, it is something I will defend if they have that ability.

MR. CLARK: Don't get me wrong, Joe, I wasn't against. I just wanted to hear how it was working out.

CHAIR CIMINO: I'm going to go to Eric Reid and then Adam Nowalsky.

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MR. ERIC REID: Thank you all for your presentation. I just would like to complement you in recognizing in some of your new items that not only do employees have rights, and our staff does a great job, and I would never say anything bad about the staff. But you are also taking action to protect employers' rights, and I think that's really important. It's a different world now, protect the corporation not only from cyber-attack, but you have rights, and recognizing the fact that employers and employees both have rights I think is very good, thank you.

MR. NOWALSKY: John brought up a word there that I think there is a lot in this section that relates to it, but I think the document would benefit from physical inclusion of the word retention in this section. You've got a paragraph that talks a lot about the process of recruitment and selection.

Under Managing Human Resources, you have a bullet point about investigating additional options and resources to improve recruitment. I think that retention element would be something. There are certainly elements here that allude to that, but listing it specifically I think would be beneficial, and I can assure you that no member of your staff put me up to that for inclusion in the document.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, but it's a great point so thank you, appreciate that. There is at least one item. I'll go to Dan.

MR. DANIEL McKIERNAN: I missed this on the Goal Number 1, it had to do with black sea bass allocations for the next stanza, and I think that would begin in 2028, and I turn to Toni for those specific details, but I think that was an oversight that we meant to get into the document.

MS. KERNS: It would be to at least have initiated a discussion by the management board to look at allocations, and the first year that

that allocation would be impacted, if the Board were to move forward with changes is 2028.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thanks, Toni, and any follow up on that? That is an important addition. Not seeing. We're looking for a motion and I don't want to influence anyone's decisions here, but I would say it should probably consider what counseling is for former chairs, also hugs from Tina and Laura would be great. Not that that has to go into the motion. We are looking for a motion on the 2026 Action Plan. Joe Grist.

MR. JOSEPH GRIST: **Move to approve the ASMFC 2026 Action Plan as modified today.**

CHAIR CIMINO: I see a second from Malcolm Rhodes. Anything to add, Joe, Malcolm? **Not seeing any, any discussions on the motion? Not seeing any, great.** It's a lot to do. I feel like no discussion on this does not mean that what happens in 2026 isn't incredibly important, but there isn't a lot of work there. I will **consider that approved by consent** and thank you for that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: All right, here is everybody's favorite part, who doesn't love a good old election. Everybody but Joe's favorite part.

CHAIR CIMINO: All I want is access to bother staff as much as possible with all my questions. That's all I need.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Everyone has that access. Before we get into the election of the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair, I just want to take a moment to present Joe as the outgoing Chair with a commemorative clock to remember his time as Commission Chair. It's been, from a staff perspective it's been wonderful working with Joe. He mentioned it earlier, when he took over as Chair he came down to the Commission and spent a full day in the office talking to people and just getting to know staff and see what's working, and what they liked about the Commission, what they think could be improved at the Commission.

I think it was really great to have that as a start to his Chairmanship. He's been in the Chair through a lot of difficult issues, a lot of menhaden and striped bass and the lobster issue that got sideways on us, and a number of other things. I think he exhibited just amazing leadership to the Commission and to staff, and worked really well with Dan.

Dan and Joe and I have a standing 8:30 call every Monday morning, and Spud was involved. Spud started that, I think. Those I think may be therapy sessions or planning sessions, I'm not sure which. But I think it's been a great two years working with Joe and he's got kind of put in a bit of an awkward spot with the CARES situation, trying to be the Chair of the Commission and wrestle through that difficult issue.

I think he's done a great job of staying neutral and looking out for the Commission throughout that process as well, so that's been great. The other thing that Joe sort of took on very personally, I think, was this notion of misinformation that's out there and you know Horseshoe crab and some of the other species people are kind of twisting the story around sometimes.

Joe took that on and worked with Tina and others to really polish up some of the outreach materials and sort of do what he could to squelch some of the misinformation that is out there. I think it was really impressive and really appreciated that he was defending the process and trying to make sure that as much as possible in the internet age that the information that is out there was reliable and based on the science that the Commission has. With that, Joe, on behalf of all the Commissioners and staff, thank you for the last two years, we really appreciate it. (Applause)

CHAIR CIMINO: Incredibly humbling. It's been an amazing experience. I need to say thank you to everybody. Fisheries management is tough enough. We've had nothing but intense

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distractions in my two years and I think it's remarkable how much staff has kept us on track, despite all of the other things that we have dealt with.

Somehow even Russia was involved, you don't expect that when you're running for Chair, I'll tell you that. I just want to say thank you to everybody and it's been an amazing experience and a little bit more tonight, unfortunately, because I have to give a speech to someone.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, don't use all your good material here.

ELECT COMMISSION CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

EXECUTIVE BEAL: With that, that brings us to the election of the new Chair and new Vice-Chair for the Commission. For that I'm going to turn over the nominations to David Borden, who is the Chair of the Commissions Nominating Committee. David.

MR. DAVID V.D. BORDEN: Thank you, Bob. The Nominating Committee consisted of Spud Woodward and Roy Miller and myself. We solicited nominations over a period of about a month and a half from all of you. We had four individuals who were named, Dan McKiernan, Doug Haymans, Chris Batsavage and Marty Gary were all suggested for different leadership positions. After consultation with the Nominating Committee both Chris and Marty either decided to decline or withdraw from the nominating process. In terms of today, we only have, I'll remove the only, we have two nominees. One for Chair and the other one for Vice-Chair.

Our normal process as Bob can explain to you is to do written ballots. Given the fact that these are the only two candidates that have been suggested, unless someone requests a written ballot, I would say we just do it by unanimous acclamation. With that Mr. Chairman, **it is my honor and pleasure to nominate Dan McKiernan as the next Chair of the Commission. So, moved.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Since that is from the Nominating Committee it does not need a second. The Commission's election process does say that

we'll pass around ballots and one vote per state and it will be signed by the state. But given the suggestion by the Chair of the Nominating Committee, is there any need to do that? This may be awkward, but does anyone have an interest in submitting a write in vote or changing it, or is there unanimous consent for approving Mr. McKiernan as the Commission's Chair? Seeing no hands around the table, I take that as there is no need for the balloting process and Dan is elected unanimously. Oh, Dan voted for himself, just for the record. We'll give him a frame for that and he can put it in his office.

CHAIR CIMINO: I want to say that my bag is over there, but I have all the votes from mine in my bag.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Okay, **any objection to electing Dan McKiernan as the Chairman of the ASMFC? Seeing none; congratulations, Dan.** (Applause)

MR. BORDEN: I continue, Mr. Chairman. The second nominee is for the Vice-Chairman slot and it's my honor to nominate Doug Haymans to be the Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Again, since it's from the Nominating Committee it does not need a second. Does anyone want to go through the paper ballot process for Vice-Chair? Seeing no request for a ballot is there **any objection to electing Doug Haymans as a Vice-Chair of ASMFC? Seeing no objections, congratulations, Doug,** and I look forward to working with you. That's it for the Business Session meeting. Yes, David.

MR. BORDEN: One other item that the three of us basically carried on a discussion about the need to kind of revisit the process, the nomination process. I think there are elements of it that should be reconsidered, relative to the need for paper ballots and circumstances for paper ballots, whether or not the issue of the

regional participation requirement, and how that would apply under certain circumstances.

I guess the Committee recommendation is the new leadership should reflect on that. Bob Beal is well versed on what our Subcommittee concerns were, and then the new leadership basically decides whether or not you want to have another committee do it or whether or not you set that same group, continue the discussions and kind of refine, clearly identify the problems and what some of the solutions might be. That is just a recommendation. Thank you, that concludes my report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Great, thank you, David. If Dan and Doug are comfortable with that the three of us can discuss it and review the current process and see if any changes are needed to be made, or if we want to set up a group to talk about it. Does that sound fair to you?

CHAIR DANIEL MCKIERNAN: I would like to thank, I guess I would call you guys elders, you know so much experience here at ASMFC, and you have a lot of wisdom and great guidance and thank you for all of your efforts. I look forward to working with you.

ADJOURNMENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: That concludes the business before the Commission today and we will recess the Business Session or the Commission will reconvene on Thursday afternoon for at least reading of the resolution. I don't think we'll have any other business, but this group will be recessed for a couple days.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m. on Tuesday, October 28, 2025)

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ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

2026 Action Plan



Approved October 28, 2025

Goal 1 – Rebuild, maintain and fairly allocate Atlantic coastal fisheries

Goal 1 focuses on the responsibility of the states to conserve and manage Atlantic coastal fishery resources for sustainable use. Commission members will advocate decisions to achieve the long-term benefits of conservation, while balancing the socioeconomic interests and needs of coastal communities. Inherent in this is the recognition that healthy and vibrant resources benefit stakeholders. The states are committed to proactive management, with a focus on integrating ecosystem services, socioeconomic impacts, habitat issues, bycatch and discard reduction measures, and protected species interactions into well-defined fishery management plans. Fishery management plans will also address fair allocation of fishery resources among the states. Understanding evolving ocean ecosystems and their impacts on fishery productivity and distribution is an elevated priority. Successful management in an evolving marine environment will depend not only on adjusting management strategies to be more adaptable and flexible, but also in reevaluating and revising, as necessary, the underlying conservation goals and objectives of fishery management plans. Current ocean conditions have a significant impact on fish stocks, fish habitats, and interactions between species and fisheries. The Commission will strive to proactively consider ecosystem level impacts when making management decisions to take a more holistic consideration of issues. Improving cooperation and coordination with federal partners and stakeholders can streamline efficiency, transparency and, ultimately, success. In the next five years, the Commission is committed to ending overfishing and working to rebuild overfished Atlantic coast fish stocks, while promoting sustainable harvest of and access to rebuilt fisheries. Where possible, the Commission will seek to aid in the rebuilding of depleted stocks, whose recovery is hindered by factors other than fishing pressure.

Fisheries management and stock assessment activities anticipated for 2026 and into 2027 are outlined below. Activities are divided into high priority species (those with significant management action, stock assessment activity, or are of critical importance to the states and their stakeholders) and medium-low priority species. For most species, there are several activities that occur on an annual or ongoing basis, including specification setting; FMP review and state compliance reports; and ensuring cooperation and consistent management programs among the states, regional councils, and NOAA Fisheries for shared resources. While ongoing activities are not listed below, they continue to be conducted. The focus of the Action Plan is to highlight new and high-profile activities where the Commission will focus its resources and energies for the next two years.

HIGH PRIORITY SPECIES

American Lobster

- **Explore initiating a management strategy evaluation to identify possible management objectives and approaches for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank lobster stock, contingent on funding and Board approval**
- Work with partners and ACCSP on maintaining tracking device data collection as part of Addendum XXIX; respond to legal challenges and regulatory changes if necessary
- Update annual indices of stock abundance and settlement, and respond if necessary
- Continue to collaborate with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (NEFMC and MAFMC, respectively) and NOAA Fisheries regarding regulations related to on-demand trap gear

- Continue to communicate with Canada DFO regarding potential changes in minimum size limits, in the maritime lobster fishing areas, and resulting trade impacts
- **Explore facilitating a meeting between the ASMFC American Lobster Technical Committee and Canada DFO lobster scientists**
- Continue to monitor and respond as necessary to NOAA rulemaking on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan modifications
- Continue to work with the Law Enforcement Subcommittee, the states, and NOAA Fisheries to improve enforcement of management measures in both state and offshore waters
- Work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistency in state and federal regulations

Atlantic Croaker

- Conduct and present traffic light analysis, and respond if necessary
- Present benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary
- Consider Plan Review Team recommendations on sciaenids species *de minimis* status criteria, and respond if necessary

Atlantic Menhaden

- **Initiate management action to address Chesapeake Bay management concerns**
- **Set 2027 and 2028 specifications**
- **Begin a review of state- by-state commercial allocation and initiate management action for 2028 implementation if necessary based on FMP guidelines**

Atlantic Striped Bass

- **Conduct 2027 benchmark stock assessment**
- **Work with the states to implement new management measures to support stock rebuilding, if approved in Addendum III**
- **Work with the contractor on development of the Atlantic Striped Bass Recreation Demand Model**
- **Begin to address Work Group tasks to be included in a management white paper**

Black Sea Bass

- ~~Finalize~~ Continue development of recreational management reform Amendment in collaboration with MAFMC
- Begin development of white paper to address recreational data collection in collaboration with MAFMC
- Review confidence interval methodology for use in the percent change approach
- **Review state- by-state commercial allocation and initiate management action if necessary**
- **Monitor and respond if necessary to MAFMC activities**

Bluefish

- ~~Finalize~~ Continue development of recreational management reform Amendment in collaboration with MAFMC

- Begin development of white paper to address recreational data collection in collaboration with MAFMC
- Review confidence interval methodology for use in the percent change approach
- Continue development of management uncertainty tool in collaboration with MAFMC
- Work with contractor on development of the Bluefish Recreation Demand Model
- **Monitor and respond if necessary to MAFMC activities**

Cobia

- **Set 2027 specifications and consider changes to recreational measures, if necessary**
- **Present benchmark stock assessment and peer review, and respond if necessary**

Horseshoe Crab

- **Conduct a stakeholder engagement process to identify possible changes to the Utility/Reward/Harvest (U/R/H) Policy functions of the ARM Framework to better align with stakeholder values, and consider recommendations**
- **Evaluate state spawning surveys and identify changes or improvements to allow future use in stock assessments**
- Monitor Endangered Species Act 90-day finding, and respond if necessary

Red Drum

- **Work with the states to implement Addendum II, if approved**
- **Conduct and present traffic light analysis, and respond if necessary**
- Consider Plan Review Team recommendations on sciaenids species *de minimis* status criteria, and respond if necessary

Scup

- Finalize-Continue development of recreational management reform Amendment in collaboration with MAFMC
- Begin development of white paper to address recreational data collection in collaboration with MAFMC
- Review confidence interval methodology for use in the percent change approach
- Develop management action in collaboration with MAFMC to address commercial winter I quota period monitoring and overage paybacks, if needed
- Monitor MAFMC activities including, but not limited to, scup discards and gear restricted areas analysis, and respond if necessary

Summer Flounder

- Finalize-Continue development of recreational management reform Amendment in collaboration with MAFMC
- Begin development of white paper to address recreational data collection in collaboration with MAFMC
- Review confidence interval methodology for use in the percent change approach
- **Monitor and respond if necessary to MAFMC activities**