MEETING OVERVIEW

Tautog Management Board
May 4, 2026
9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

Chair: Matt Gates (CT)	Technical Committee Chair: Sandra Dumais (NY)	Law Enforcement Committee Representative: Brian Scott (NJ)
Vice-Chair: Rich Wong (DE)	Advisory Panel Chair: Vacant	Previous Board Meeting: October 27, 2025
Voting Members: MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NMFS (9 votes)		

2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from October 2025

3. Public Comment – At the beginning of the meeting public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time should use the webinar raise your hand function and the Board Chair will let you know when to speak. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Board Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

4. Technical Committee Report on Board Tasks (9:15-10:00 a.m.)

Background

- In October 2025, the Board reviewed the 2025 assessment update, which determined that overfishing is occurring the NJ-NYB and DMV regions.
- As per Amendment 1, the Board requested projections from the Technical Committee for the harvest reductions necessary to have a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 3 and 5 year timeframes. The Board also requested the use of the Risk & Uncertainty Tool, as well as a qualitative review of new fishery-independent indices from the DMV region **(Briefing Materials)**.

Presentations

- Technical Committee Report by S. Dumais

5. Consider Guidance to Plan Development Team for Draft Addendum (10:00-10:30 a.m.)
Possible Action

Background

- In response to the 2025 assessment update, the Board initiated an addendum to address the changes in stock status for NJ-NYB and DMV. The Draft Addendum will also consider allowing for the MARI and LIS regions to modify management for precautionary or alignment purposes.
- The Advisory Panel met to review the 2025 assessment update and provide additional input for Board consideration (**Supplemental Materials**).

Presentations

- Amendment 1 Guidance and AP Comments by J. Boyle

6. Other Business/Adjourn

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Tautog Management Board

FROM: James Boyle, FMP Coordinator

DATE: April 28, 2026

SUBJECT: Tautog Advisory Panel Review of 2025 Stock Assessment Update

A Tautog Advisory Panel (AP) meeting was scheduled for April 21st to review the 2025 stock assessment update and provide comments ahead of the Board considering direction to the Plan Development Team for Draft Addendum I.

AP Members in attendance: John Mihale (NY), Carey Evans (DE)

ASMFC Staff: James Boyle, Katie Drew, Samara Nehemiah

2025 Tautog Stock Assessment Update

Carey Evans (DE): The assessment is missing out on the pot and trap survey in Delaware that has been conducted for at least the last decade, and 9 out of 11 reefs are within state waters. Maryland charter boats and Virginia also have their own tagging programs to provide additional data. Wave data from 2023 and 2024 show a lack of effort and harvest in the fall because many for-hire industry members and recreational anglers were targeting bluefin tuna, but they were shut out of the bluefin tuna fishery in 2025 causing the tautog numbers to increase again.

John Mihale (NY): We keep doing the same seine surveys that are not accounting for the species moving to other areas and are consequently not reflecting the current stock. Tautog have moved to the south shore inlets with good tidal flows, particularly to bridges that underwent restoration efforts that improved tautog habitat. Additionally, the majority of fish from the recreational fishery and a significant portion of the commercial fishery use rod and reel, and there needs to be a commercial rod and reel survey.

Draft Addendum I

Carey Evans (DE): Supports status quo. A 4-8% cut would be manageable but do not want to see an increase in the minimum size, since the fish already are able to reproduce multiple times before they can be harvested. The other options in the document should allow for cuts or closures to be chosen in any wave to allow for the fishery to pick the least disruptive time.

John Mihale (NY): Supports status quo. Opposes any further regulations on both the recreational and commercial fisheries. The size limit allows for ample opportunity for the fish to

reproduce multiple times before harvest. Furthermore, the limit already causes many undersized fish to be released, which is causing increases in post-release mortality. Additionally, inconsistent changes in regulations in NJ-NYB could push New York harvesters into Long Island Sound. Tautog are abundant but are undercounted in the fishery-independent surveys due to their shift from past locations.

MOST BLACKFISH CAUGHT (RECREATIONAL) BY ROD + REEL
LARGE PCT OF COMMERCIAL CATCH ALSO BY ROD + REEL

age 13 and to 0.12 - 0.16 inches per year after age 17 (Cooper 1967) Tautog are long lived fish with males living longer than 30 years and females around 25 years (Cooper 1966, Hostetter and Munroe 1993).

As stated above, many variables may affect the observed length of an individual tautog at a given age, and age-length keys show significant overlap of age groups by length. On average, Table 1 provides a reasonably accurate guide.

Table 1. Tautog length-at-age relationship.

Length (inches)	Age (years)
3	1
5.5	2
9	3
10.5	4
12.5	5
14	6
15.5	7
17	8
18	9
19	10
21	15
22	20

REC
APR 28 2026
By: .....

John George Mihale
153 California Place North
Island Park, NY 11558

04/23/2026

1.2.1.7 *Feeding*

Larval tautog probably feed on water column plankton although no specific data are available.

Juvenile tautog feed primarily on small benthic and pelagic invertebrates including: copepods, amphipods, isopods, ostracods, polychaetes, crabs and mussels (Olla et al. 1975, Festa 1979, Grover 1982, Sogard et al. 1992, Dorf 1994) . The composition of the juvenile diet changes with fish size. In Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, small young-of-the-year (0.8 - 2.0 inches total length) primarily consumed amphipods and copepods. Juveniles 2.0 -2.7 inches in length consumed a variety of invertebrates. The largest young-of-the-year (2.7 - 3.9 inches) ate mainly small shrimp and crabs (Dorf 1994). Similar diets were reported in New Jersey (Festa 1979, Sogard et al. 1992) and Chesapeake Bay waters (Orth and Heck 1980). In New York waters, juveniles 4.1 - 8.1 inches in length fed primarily on blue mussels throughout the year (Olla et al. 1975). Larger juveniles (7.9 - 12.6 inches) in New Jersey were observed to feed on xanthid crabs (Festa 1979).

Adult tautog feed primarily on the blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) and other shellfish throughout the year. The diet can be extremely varied depending on location and availability. The following items have been found to be eaten by adult tautog: barnacles, various crabs, sand dollars, amphipods, isopods, shrimp, lobsters, periwinkles, scallops, soft shell clams and razor clams (Bigelow and Schroeder 1953, Olla et al. 1974, Steimle and Ogren 1982, Auster 1989).

Adults grasp mussels using their large canine teeth, tearing them from the surrounding surface by shaking their heads. Small mussels are swallowed whole, while larger, hard-shelled ones are crushed by the pharyngeal teeth prior to swallowing. Canine teeth are not used for crushing shells (Olla et al. 1974).

IF BLACKFISH ARE SEXUALLY MATURE AT 7-12 INCHES
THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY SPAWN 4-5 TIMES BEFORE
THEY CAN BE REMOVED THROUGH FISHING. MAJORITY OF STATES
HAVE A 16" RECREATIONAL SIZE LIMIT AND 90% OF
TAUTOG REMOVALS ARE BY THE RECREATIONAL FISHERY
NO CHANGES ARE NEEDED — STATUS QUO