



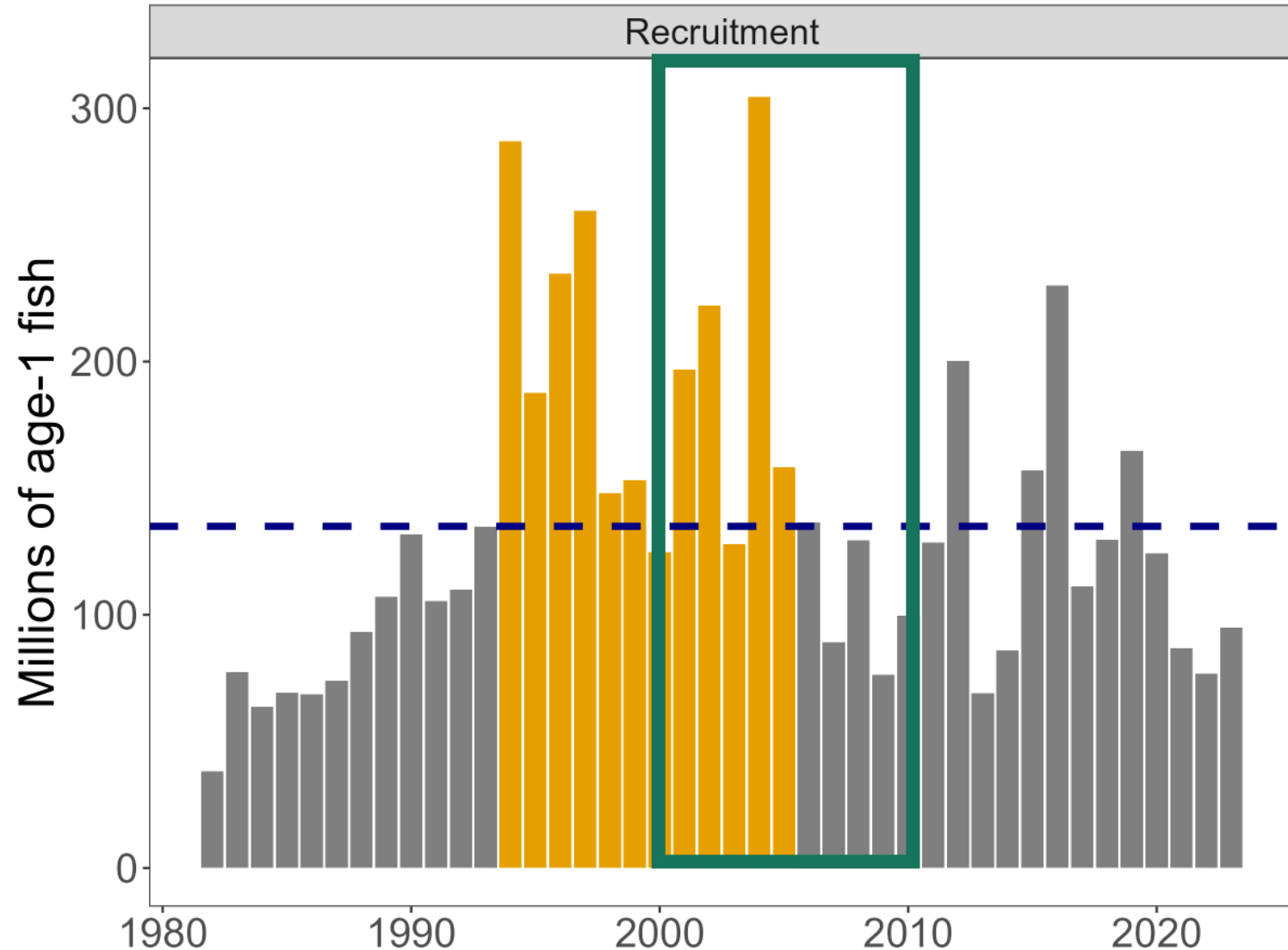
Guidance to SAS on Biological Reference Points and Spatial Management

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May 4, 2026

- Background on current BRPs
- Topics for Board input
 - Balancing SSB and F
 - Spatial Management
- Timeline of next steps

- Striped bass were near or above the SSB target & the F threshold from 2000-2010
 - This period of high SSB and high F was supported by a series of strong year classes from 1993-2003
- While the SSB target is still attainable, the F rate required to do so may not be acceptable to managers and stakeholders under current recruitment levels



Current Request for Guidance

- The SAS will be exploring other reference point definitions to address TOR #6
- To develop BRPs that best address managers' objectives, the SAS is seeking guidance on the following topics:
 1. How does the Board want to balance preserving SSB and allowing fishing?
 2. What does the Board want from a spatial management framework?

Current Request for Guidance

- Do NOT need:
 - Board consensus on the issues
 - A specific BRP definition
- Would be helpful to obtain:
 - Range of opinions and the factors the Board considers important for managing this species

- There is a trade-off between preserving SSB and allowing F
 - Higher $F \rightarrow$ lower SSB
 - Higher SSB \rightarrow lower F
- Lowering the SSB reference points will likely allow for a higher F target and threshold, but will not necessarily increase catch
- SSB is a proxy for larger fish in the ocean region; lower SSB means lower abundance of 28"+ fish in general, therefore lower catch rates/encounter rates

- It would be helpful to receive input on things like:
 - the preferred balance between SSB and F
 - the relative importance of maximizing yield vs. maximizing catch rates or the availability of trophy size fish
 - acceptable level of risk when it comes to preventing stock collapse
 - alternative metrics for stock health such as total abundance or abundance of specific size or age classes instead of female SSB
 - **a preferred historical time-period for F reference points and/or for SSB reference points (i.e., when was the Board satisfied with fishery performance?)**
 - **a lower limit on acceptable SSB levels, relative to 1995 levels or based on the preferred historical time-period**

BRPs and Spatial Management

- Currently: single coastwide set of BRPs, separate regional management regimes
- SAS is continuing work on a spatial model for this benchmark, which presents additional questions/challenges for management

BRPs and Spatial Management

- Is the Board interested in spatial BRPs – that is, having specific targets and thresholds by region to evaluate stock status against – or would the Board prefer to keep coastwide reference points and use spatial management regimes to attempt to achieve those targets?
 - What happens when one region exceeds their F threshold, but another region does not?

BRPs and Spatial Management

- Would a Chesapeake/Delaware Bay region be acceptable to the Board, or would the Board prefer to keep Chesapeake Bay distinct from other regions?
 - Combining CB and DB would be more in line with recent research on the genetic similarity of fish from these areas and the frequent movement of fish between the Bays via the C&D Canal
- Is the Board interested in developing BRPs for the Hudson River if the data supported that?

- **May 4, 2026 (Spring Meeting): Board provides guidance to SAS**
- Summer 2026: SAS incorporates Board guidance into BRP options
- August 24-28, 2026: Assessment Workshop
- March 2027: Review Workshop (Spring Research Track)
 - Peer review panel provides feedback on BRPs or BRP methods
- Spring/Summer 2027: Board receives the assessment, including BRP options for consideration



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Questions



Work Group on Future Striped Bass Management

Request for Further Board Guidance

May 2026



Why the Work Group Was Formed

- Board approved the WG in October 2025 to guide striped bass management beyond the current FMP horizon of 2029
- Driven by severely reduced reproductive success in the Chesapeake Bay and changing environmental conditions
- WG tasked with developing a white paper to inform a future management document
- Initial Board discussion provided in February 2026
 - Staff is seeking further direction



The Work Group's Six Core Tasks

- Review Biological Reference Points (BRPs) and consider recruitment-sensitive, model-based approaches
- Evaluate hatchery stocking as a research and management tool, with cost analysis
- Explore whether other river systems beyond the Chesapeake Bay can contribute to the coastal stock
- Assess drivers of recruitment success/failure across Chesapeake Bay, Delaware, and Hudson River
- Examine reproductive contribution of large vs. small female fish and size-based management implications
- Develop methods to address discard mortality in catch and release fishery



Options for Work Group Composition

- Option 1: Core WG of Board Members only — follows the standard ASMFC WG process
- Option 2: Mixed WG with Board members, Advisory Panel (3), and Technical Committee (2) representatives
- Option 3: Include Members of the Public alongside Board/AP/TC members — Board determines allocation
- All options target a manageable core size of 12-15 members



Key Questions the Board Must Answer on WG Composition

- Will WG seats be allocated by category to ensure diversity of sector and regional representation?
- Will there be a structured nomination process — e.g., each state nominates a set number of candidates?
- How will final participants be selected from among nominees?
- Which composition option — or combination — does the Board prefer?



Pathways for Stakeholder Engagement

- Sub-groups: Task-specific groups of technical experts (e.g., dedicated hatchery stocking sub-group)
- Facilitated Workshops: In-depth sessions on focused topics — requires dedicated funding
- Public Surveys and/or Webinars: Coastwide or regionally tailored; avoids duplication with future comment periods
- Dedicated Public Input Time: Structured public comment built into each WG webinar agenda



Timeline: Sequencing Tasks Around the Stock Assessment

- Benchmark stock assessment peer review is scheduled for March 2027
- Assessment-related tasks (BRPs, recruitment, spawning areas, size-based management) should await assessment completion
- Non-assessment tasks (release mortality, hatchery stocking) can begin sooner — Board to confirm preferred timeline
- Board members suggest prioritizing the task list to focus WG efforts and set clear milestones



Summary of Direction from the Board

- WG Composition: Which option (1, 2, or 3)? Nomination and selection process? Seat allocation by category?
- Stakeholder Engagement: Which input pathways? Coastwide or regional? Role of CESS in advising the process?
- Task Prioritization/Timeline: Which tasks begin now vs. post-assessment? Sub-groups needed for early-start tasks?



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NOAA Technical Memo on Striped Bass Offshore Aquaculture



NOAA Technical Memo

- **NOAA presented a technical memo on offshore striped bass aquaculture February 2026**
- **NOAA is seeking feedback on the Boards position regarding the memo**



Possible Areas of focus for Board Comments

- **Economic Analysis**
 - No estimate of us production costs
 - No market impact analysis
- **Sterility technologies have not been tested**
 - Wild stock risk with escapement
- **Limited thermal modeling data**
- **Disease therapy untested**
- **Habitat and protected species risk**



Comment Timeline

If the Board comments staff recommends the following timeline

- **Provide specific comments to Staff by mid June**
- **Staff will draft a letter for SB Board and ISFMP PB review in August**
- **Letter to NOAA in early August**