

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD**

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

**October 30, 2025
Approved May 6, 2026**

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1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of August 2025** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to adopt Option B Establish Process to Adjust Management Measure for Section 3.1** (Page 4). Motion by Ben Dyar; second by Spud Woodward. Motion passes (Page 5).
4. **Move to adopt Option B Establish Process to Adjust State Management Measures, Allowing for Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality for Section 3.2** (Page 7). Motion by Spud Woodward; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes (Page 11).
5. **Move to separate Issue 3.3 in Addendum II for the northern region stock and the southern region stock so that the decision is independent for each stock’s preferred management program** (Page 14). Motion by Ben Dyar; second by Spud Woodward. Motion passes (Page 15).
6. **Move to adopt Option B for the Southern Stock for Section 3.3** (Page 15). Motion by Erika Burgess; second by Spud Woodward. Motion passes (Page 17).
7. **Motion to adopt Option B, of Section 3.4 of the Red Drum Draft Addendum II, setting the Virginia, Maryland and PRFC recreational measures for red drum as a 18”-26” slot with a 3 fish per person possession limit** (Page 19). Motion by Dave Sikorski; second by Ron Owens. Motion passes (Page 20).
8. **Move to adopt Option B Update *De minimis* Provisions for Section 3.5** (Page 21). Motion by Spud Woodward; second by Mel Bell. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 21).
9. **Move to set the following implementation schedule for Section 3.3 and 3.4:**
 - **States to submit proposals by April 1, 2026.**
 - **The Board will review and consider approval of proposals at the Spring 2026 Commission meeting.**
 - **States to implement regulations by September 1, 2026.**(Page 22). Motion by Ben Dyar; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes (Page 23).
10. **Move to approve Addendum II as modified today** (Page 23). Motion by Joe Grist; second by Dave Sikorski Motion passes (Roll Call: In Favor – NJ, FL, GA, SC, VA, PRFC, MD, DE; Opposed – NC; Abstentions – None; Nulls – None) (Page 23).
11. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 24).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

| | |
|---|---|
| Joe Cimino, NJ (AA) | Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA) |
| Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA) | Rep. Brian Turner (LA) |
| Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA) | Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for B. Keppler (AA) |
| Rich Wong, DE, proxy for J. Clark (AA) | Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA) |
| Roy Miller, DE (GA) | Mel Bell, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA) |
| Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA) | Doug Haymans, GA (AA) |
| Carrie Kennedy, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA) | Spud Woodward, GA (GA) |
| Robert T. Brown, MD, proxy for R. Dize (GA) | Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA) |
| David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA) | Gary Jennings, FL (GA) |
| Joe Grist, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA) | Ron Owens, PRFC |

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

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Bob Beal | Caitlin Starks | Chelsea Tuohy |
| Toni Kerns | Tracey Bauer | Katie Drew |
| Tina Berger | James Boyle | Samara Nehemiah |
| Madeline Musante | Emilie Franke | CJ Schlick |

The Sciaenids Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Ballroom East/West via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Thursday, October 30, 2025, and was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Chair Doug Haymans.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR DOUG HAYMANS: Good morning, welcome to the fourth and final day of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Annual Meeting, and the loveliest day of all. I hope you guys enjoy liquid sunshine. I am calling to order the Sciaenids Management Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR HAYMANS: First order of business is the approval of the agenda. Are there any additional items to add to the agenda? Seeing none; we'll consider that approved by consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR HAYMANS: If you've had a chance to read through the voluminous proceedings of the previous meeting in August, are there any changes, additions, deletions? Seeing none; we will consider those approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR HAYMANS: Now we move to the time where the public has an opportunity to comment on anything not on the agenda. In the room I see two members of the public if they wish to comment, and I see neither one of them. Is there anybody online? No one online, very good, then.

CONSIDER RED DRUM ADDENDUM II: MODIFICATIONS TO RED DRUM MANAGEMENT FOR FINAL APPROVAL

CHAIR HAYMANS: We can get to the heart of the matter 15 minutes ahead of time. Tracey. We're going to take up Addendum II to

Amendment 2 to the Red Drum Fishery Management Plan.

The way we're going to do this is Tracey is going to walk us through each option one at a time. We will discuss the option, the public comment, all those sorts of good things and then we will move on that option, rather than going through the entire paper all at one time. With that, Tracey, it is all yours.

MS. TRACEY BAUER: Like Mr. Haymans said, I am going to start off with a very brief overview of the timeline, where we came from. Now that we're here a little bit of background. I'm going to give an overall Public Comment Summary and summary of the AP discussion before we delve into each specific issue one by one. At that time, I will give the public comment and the AP discussion on each issue separately that was specific to that issue.

Again, just as a brief reminder for everyone here and anyone online. One year ago, the Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment was approved for management use. The Board tasked the TC to look at next steps.

Back in May, earlier this year, May 2025, the Board initiated Draft Addendum II, and public comment period was held last month in September. Today the Board will be taking final action on Draft Addendum II. Again, a little bit of background, just to make sure everyone is on the same page. In the 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment, the southern and northern regions were assessed separately, with two separate assessments. The southern region had a stock synthesis model and the northern region is currently using a traffic light analysis to assess stock status.

The southern region red drum stock was found to be overfished and experiencing overfishing, and the northern region red drum stock was found to be not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. However, the red drum northern region assessment did observe an increasing trend in fishing mortality.

**REVIEW OPTIONS, PUBLIC COMMENT
SUMMARY, AND ADVISORY PANEL REPORT**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Red drum are currently managed under Amendment 2 from 2002, and in Amendment 2 it directs all states within a management unit to implement the appropriate recreational bag and size limit combinations to obtain the goal or target 40% spawning potential ratio SPR or F40%. In Amendment 2 it actually specifies a specific method, the Vaughan and Carmichael Paper that states need to use to determine what regulations obtain that 40% SPR target. It did not provide any flexibility for states to use any other method to accomplish this. Moving on to the Public Comment Summary Overview. Before we move into each separate issue in the document, public comments were accepted through midnight on October 1st, earlier this month, 382 comments were received with 377 individual comments and 5 written comments from organizations.

We received comments from Massachusetts through Florida, with a handful of comments from states north of New Jersey saying that they come down south to fish for red drum. In that number of written comments we received, a few people had also provided comment at the hearings as well, when I give you those numbers something to keep in mind.

The organizations we received public comment from there was a joint letter between the American Sportfishing Association, with the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, 100 Miles, American Saltwater Guides Association, Release Over 20, and the Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association.

Seven public hearings were held in September, 2025. Overall, 187 people were in attendance at, at least one public hearing, but that number could include some people who attended multiple hearings, but does not include state staff, commissioners or proxies in attendance or

Commission staff. A total of 34 comments were provided at the public hearings.

Again, I am going to go over a couple of like general comments that don't apply to any specific management option in this document, but they were commenting on red drum, so I am going to go through them now ahead of all the options. There were multiple comments that shared observations of how many red drum they were seeing, in Georgia, specifically for the most part.

Some expressing concern that there were too many red drum, and did not believe any regulation changes should be made in Georgia. In that line, at least one commenter expressed concern that any restrictions to the regulations made at this time might never be lifted. There were one or two comments that also expressed concern with the assessment results, and noted there are other important factors to take into account in assessments, such as predation by dolphin and sharks that they were observing, and the potential overabundance of food for red drum. Conversely, a number of commenters did not express again, any support for any particular option in the document, but instead expressed general concern about the current state of the red drum population in their state, and support for taking management action to conserve and protect the stock, particularly stressing the urgency to take action.

Several commenters expressed support for prohibiting or limiting the targeting of mature spawning red drum, and/or closing known spawning areas in the fall. Multiple commenters expressed support for a catch and release only moratorium for red drum for at least a year, and there was also general support for lowering the 5-fish bag limits in the Potomac River Fisheries Commission and Georgia, which commentors thought was excessive and unsustainable.

Multiple comments also stressed the importance of factors such as habitat protection and restoration, enforcement of regulations and monitoring of discard mortality for red drum. Several comments also stated we should be addressing these issues,

especially habitat restoration, instead of focusing on changes to the regulations.

Several comments expressed support for regulation changes to the commercial fishery and/or the for-hire fishery specifically. Comments expressed support for states looking at additional regulations related to red drum fishing guide services. They were noting the frequency of their trips targeting red drum.

Several comments provided or stressed the importance of the financial aspect of red drum to the respective communities. Several comments provided recommendations related to the need for more research into mortality rates of red drum due to improper tackle, such as through the use of non-offset circle hooks and j-hooks.

There was also a recommendation to encourage increased communication between the fishing community and managers, and there was one comment suggesting we look into Bayesian or Hierarchical Models for red drum. Lastly, a commenter expressed disagreement with allowing the public to keep fish smaller than 20 inches.

This commenter stated people will keep fewer fish if they can take home larger fish. Then also in general, there were a number of comments that were suggesting specific regulation changes, which you can find in the public comment summary. For the Advisory Panel, they met on October 8. There were four members in attendance, 2 from Virginia and 2 from North Carolina.

Prior to beginning any discussion on any of the issues, the AP had noted that there were no AP members in attendance that day from the southern region, so they didn't feel comfortable commending on any southern region-specific issues. Again, like public comment, I just wanted to share some of the AP discussion that doesn't fit under any specific option, which

primarily focused on current trends related to red drum in Chesapeake Bay.

One AP member noted that they've been observing an influx of trophy size fish, and keeper fish have been more difficult to find. Another AP member has been observing decent numbers of puppy drum, and one AP member noted that red drum abundance in Chesapeake Bay is highly episodic, with the Bay being overrun with red drum some years and they are harder to find in others. Then lastly, one AP member noted the belief that currently the striped bass and red drum fisheries in the Bay are not directly in competition, and thinks more recreational fishermen are targeting red drum now in the Bay due to the decline in large croaker.

We are going to be moving into the management options. There are five separate issues in this Addendum, and as always, the Board will have the opportunity to select a measure within the range of options that went out for public comment, including combining options across issues. First, Section 3.1, Alternative State Management Regimes, which would apply to both the northern and southern regions.

This issue in the Addendum directly addresses that problem that I previously stated that states can no longer use the Vaughan and Carmichael methodology in Amendment 2 to determine which regulations obtained the fishing mortality goal, as that methodology is no longer considered the best available science nor directly comparable to outputs from the modern red drum assessment.

Instead of Addendum 2 identifying a new specific method for states to use to determine which regulations will allow states to achieve the fishing mortality goal, the Board expressed interest in allowing for future flexibility by developing a process, which allows states to propose changes to regulations in response to the information on the stock.

As a part of this process, new methodologies to estimate the impact of regulation changes on fishing mortality could be proposed and approved

by the Board. Importantly, establishing this process at this time would allow the southern region states to respond to the results of the recent benchmark assessment.

In Section 3.1 there is Option A, where red drum management would continue to be limited to what is in Amendment 2 to determine the impact of regulations on catch and fishing mortality, and Option B, which would establish this new process to allow states in either stock to propose changes to the management measures.

This process would typically occur following the acceptance of a stock assessment for management use by the Board to end or prevent overfishing. The process in short, would be that states would develop proposals. The Technical Committee would review the proposals and make sure that they follow the Board approved methodology, and then states would implement the regulations.

States could gather public input within their state on their own at any time during this process, and Option B also includes language to clarify that if a state has already implemented regulations to reduce catch following the final year in assessment, data from MRIP could be used to estimate actual realized reductions achieved to determine the impact of those regulation changes on catch.

For the public comments received regarding Section 3.1. There were no comments that expressed support of status quo, Option A. All comments received supported Option B, and the commenters noted that Option B would modernize red drum management and allow states the flexibility to select measures that account for local preferences. The AP did not comment on this issue specifically. Mr. Chair, if you would like to pause here that is the end of Section 3.1.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Any questions for Tracey on 3.1, Public Comment or anything of that nature? Any discussion on 3.1? Erika.

MS. ERIKA BURGESS: Question/comment. This Addendum goes back and forth between the use of region and stock. It was assessed as two separate stocks. I think using the term region gives a different connotation that they are not separate stocks. I would prefer if when this is cleaned up for final that the Addendum replace region with stock.

MS. TONI KERNS: As long as it's the same meaning in the sentences that we change we can do that, at the Board's will. But if it was intended to mean something different than that, then we would leave it, for that sentence we would leave it be.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you for that explanation, Toni. Ben.

MR. BEN DYAR: In the essence of time, I would like to go ahead and make a motion on this option. I believe staff have that, and I can speak to it once it is read.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Go ahead, Ben.

MR. DYAR: **Move to adopt Option B, Establish Process to Adjust Management Measures for Section 3.1.** If I get a second.

CHAIR HAYMANS: A motion and a second by Spud Woodward. Okay, Ben, go ahead.

MR. DYAR: Certainly nothing personal if John Carmichael is in the room or listening online, but the great work that he did and Vaughan. But as it's mentioned that this is no longer the best available science and that Option B would allow the states flexibility along with the Board to make the best decisions is what is right for their management options, in regards to the stock assessment.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Anyone else? Any members of the public wishing to speak before we vote? Any members of the public online wishing to speak?

Very good. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none; this motion passes, thank you 3.2.**

MS. BAUER: Moving on to Section 3.2, Allow Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality for Use in Management, which would apply to both the northern and southern regions, unless otherwise specified by the Board in their motion. Section 3.2, allow alternative methods to estimate fishing mortality in the draft Addendum originates from a request by some members of the Board.

This issue is meant to proactively address concerns from Board members that delays to future assessments may delay a state's ability to reevaluate the impacts of red drum management on the stock or on four states to use outdated methods to provide management advice on red drum. Current Commission guidelines found in the Commission's Technical Committee Guidance Document state that alternative analyses or methods to assess a stock must be submitted within the Commission's assessment process, so whenever a new benchmark assessment occurs, to be considered for management use.

For example, if a state completes its own assessment of a sub-stock between Commission assessments, and finds out that there have been improvements to the stock status of their sub-stock currently in the Commission's red drum fishery management plan, or any Commission document. There is not a process to allow a state to bring forward those results to make adjustments to the management measures.

This leads to the options for Section 3.2. First there is Option A, status quo, which follows the current guidelines found in the Technical Committee Guidance Document that outside assessments should be brought forward during a Commission Benchmark Stock Assessment, if a group would like their assessment to be considered for management use.

Alternative assessments are subject to the same standards, documentation and process as Commission assessments, including Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Technical Committee and Independent Peer Review. Option B would establish a process to allow for states to propose alternative methods to estimate fishing mortality and use these results to make management decisions outside of the Commission's assessment process.

Briefly, the process described or proposed in Option B would include the following steps. States would submit their method or analyses to the Technical Committee. The Technical Committee would review these analyses. The Board would also have the option to recommend additional review by the Assessment Science Committee.

The Board then would review the recommendations from the Technical Committee and the Assessment Science Committee if applicable, and would make the decision whether to improve those methods for management use. If the methods are approved for management use by the Board, then the states would follow a similar process as described in the section we just went over, 3.1 to submit a proposal with management measures to be approved by the Board.

In summary, for public comments received on this option. A majority of the comments were in favor of status quo, but there were several comments in favor of Option B. Some of the reasoning behind their support for either Option A or Option B, so for status quo comments expressing support for Option A expressed support for any new assessment methods undergoing rigorous review with the current process, which would ensure there is transparency and the consistency has remained among regional partners.

For the comments that supported Option B, allowing alternative methods to estimate fishing mortality, they pointed towards the review by the Technical Committee and Assessment Science Committee, which they argued would mirror the rigor of a formal review process to ensure that the

alternative methods are technically sound. They also put forward that Option B would improve the timeliness and new information, and allow for additional flexibility for the states in the management of red drum. Like Section 3.1 there were no AP comments in regards to this issue. Mr. Chair, I'll hand it over to you. That is the end of Section 3.2.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you, very much, Tracey. I'll just say as we begin this next two sections that I am very respectful of a comment that came in. I'm speaking specifically to Georgia's standpoint. But I know a lot of the members of the public that were there, the ones that commented that it was very heavily guide oriented and guides were pushing the issue.

To me there was a bit of lack of understanding, particularly in 3.2, and you see that in the fact that they want transparency and consistency. I don't think there is a more transparent or consistent process than what the Commission goes through to make rules. I think, for at least me, that is where a lot of that comment was coming from. I'll say that and open it for discussion. Ben.

MR. DYAR: Hey, Mr. Chair, I have a question. For the Board if it desires in this process, if Option B is chosen to have the ASC Review, is that necessary to be done through a majority vote, or is it any Board member that requests that review to the ASC?

MS. KERNS: I need to read how the option read really quick.

MR. DYAR: Sure.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Toni is going to dig into that for just a second and we'll look for others. Chris.

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Tracey, I should know this from reading the Draft Addendum a couple of times at least. But did the PDT give any

recommendations on, if Option B was chosen what kind of timeline there should be before that is considered? Should we have like management in place for a certain number of years removed from the last stock assessment? I didn't know if they gave any guidance on that or not.

MS. BAUER: I believe in some of the discussions, maybe not so much with the PDT. But when we discussed some of this with the Technical Committee and the Stock Assessment Subcommittee, I think there was some talk of possibly at least three years.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Ben.

MR. DYAR: I have a second question while we're figuring out the first. Just for clarity, and I believe it says this in here, so I apologize. But as Chris said, I've read this a few times. If Option B is chosen and it goes through the process and reviewed by the Committees, and the Board moves forward with some alternative measures for F. Is that then automatically how it's going to be set for specific regions, or is that going to be for a specific state or is it an and/or, or is only an or? Does that make sense.

MS. BAUER: I think so. The way I had interpreted this option is that the alternative methods to estimate F if they were accepted for management use. Is that the situation that you're asking about? That it would be a stop gap until we could reevaluate the region as a whole. That was how I interpreted it, but I'm not sure if there were other interpretations of that.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Erika.

MS. BURGESS: For the stocks we would evaluate F. I want to make sure that we're using consistent terms that is how the current fishery is assessed. I think it would be premature to say it would have to be one or the other, I think it would depend upon the developed methodology, and whether the states within the region have the data to demonstrate what that F would be. I am comfortable with leaving it open, and letting the TC

and ASC guide us as a management board and its applicability in use.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Toni, to answer Ben's question.

MS. KERNS: Ben, I think that this Board could specify and then we could put it in because it's pretty loose in how it's written here, so there is not a lot of specificity. If you want to say a Board member, we can get that into the document, or if it needs to be a majority vote of the Board then we would put that into the document. But I do think it would be helpful if you're looking for just to let us know what you want us to put in here.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Carrie.

MS. CARRIE KENNEDY: I just wanted to make the point that I think in a time of changing stock distributions that it is important for the Commission to have additional processes that allow flexibility. As we sort out and figure out new ways to do things, I think we need to try doing things like this more. I definitely think Option B is the way to go.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Rich, did you have something?

MR. RICH WONG: I just wanted to make the comment that estimating F at the state level, that is not an easy feat. Then going and tasking the TC and the ASC to evaluate or justify those estimates is not an easy task either. Just a little bit concerned about Option B there.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I know that there are some states with a lot more robust programs than ours and are capable of doing that. I don't think that we should limit those states' ability to suggest they are in total management. That's my thinking. Any others? Any other discussion?

MR. SPUD WOODWARD: No discussion, but I am ready to make a motion, Mr. Chair. Put it

up on the board for us, please. I **move to adopt Option B, Establish Process to Adjust State Management Measures, Allowing for Alternative Methods to Estimate Fishing Mortality for Section 3.2.** I'll certainly add comments as needed.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I have a second from Dave. Discussion. Do you want to follow up on that, Spud?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, I think there has been some discussion about it. I think it's certainly valid, and I think it's actually a very necessary complement to what we just approved in 3.1, that we be able to evaluate alternative management approaches is certainly consistent with what we tried to do across many other species in the Commission.

Obviously, if a state has the capacity to estimate fishing mortality that is going to be part and parcel to them being able to evaluate the efficacy of an alternative management approach, as well as any reviewers of that. I just echo what you said when we first started discussing this. I do think that there is an erroneous perception that the review under Option B would not be very rigorous, and it would be a pathway for states to maybe engage in a more risk prone approach, and I certainly don't think that is the case at all.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I'm in a tough position, because as much as I agree with what Spud just said, this type of process is very important. I still have real concerns with what was put forward so far here for this. We manage a lot of species. We've had unique situations in the past. I've been trying to think about what is the most relevant connections to this.

I think about striped bass in the Albemarle Sound, but we're talking about stocks that we were given some confidence, were not necessarily migratory stock. We treat speckled trout the same way. We've had many conversations about whether or not ASMFC should even be involved. These stocks are migratory.

I think to even consider something like this for some of our other species would be shocking to people, quite frankly. I don't know that we quite got there yet on the methodology laid out. As Rich said, I think it's a very difficult task for the TC and AFC to be the ones that would have to do that. So far, that is my biggest concern.

I would much rather see, you know if we were talking about a stock that was less migratory that you are evaluating, or a much smaller F rate, and there was still a peer review process. You know we've done desk peer reviews for this species before. Even that being thrown out there is a little more comforting to me, so I can't support this and I'm sorry. I do agree that we need to get to a place where we can do this for some stocks.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: I have the same concerns as Joe and Rich, and I had these concerns when this was brought up at an earlier meeting. It comes down to trying to compare a state level stock assessment to the coastwide stock assessment for the same population. The challenges of getting an F rate were already discussed, but I'm trying to understand how biomass estimates would be comparable in that case.

I agree that Option B is more timely compared to the Stock Assessment schedule, but I think I need to remind the Board that based on the stock projections for the southern stock the stock rebuilding time is measured in decades. We probably won't see any major changes right away in the status. With that I would like to offer a substitute motion. Move to adopt Option B for establishing a process to adjust state management measures, allowing for, basically Option B for Section 3.3. Oops, Option A, sorry.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I would suggest that rather than offering a substitute for Option A, you just

vote down Option B, if that is what you want. I mean there are only two options there, it's either A or B. If you want A, you just vote down B. I understand that is my prerogative. Chris, if you are interested in A, then I would suggest vote no on this particular motion. Erika.

MS. BURGESS: The previous guidance we had as a management board for setting measures to not overfished and overfishing in this fishery came from 2001, and we didn't have any new guidance since. If we have to wait until a new assessment, and assessing this species is incredibly difficult.

With the inshore fishery operating largely on juveniles, and the offshore fishery being completely unknown, we have great challenges and great uncertainty with the assessment results and with the assessment methodologies that we can use, 3.2 provides a way for states with data to use alternative methods.

We have no control really over when a new benchmark assessment occurs. We have seen and we're currently under federal uncertainty with funding. We have no control over when SEDAR will pick up our projects. We have things delayed by cobia on a routine basis. This provides a way, not for states to carte blanche do whatever they want, or even the stocks and the states that manage those stocks to do whatever they want.

But for them to bring options before the Board to be reviewed by the Technical Committees and the Assessment Science Committee, and then have that information brought back to the Board. I think there is a high level of scrutiny that any state would be put under, and eliminating any alternatives is really, I don't think in this Board's best interest.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Erika, apologies for the technical issues. Spud then Mel.

MR. WOODWARD: Just a couple of comments, one about this migratory behavior aspect. I've been working with red drum before some folks in this room were even born, and we've learned a lot in those ensuing decades. Really, I mean I think we

mistakenly treat the southern stock as having the same migratory behavior that the northern stock, and it really doesn't.

We do contribute to a shared spawning stock biomass to a point. They are genetically identical, but behaviorally they are segregated in time and space to a point I have personally caught fish, adult fish that I've tagged a year later in the same spot, so there is a lot of site fidelity back too. Functionally we have sub stocks, and those sub stocks are subject to highly variable fishing pressure and environmental constraints when you move from Florida all the way up to Virginia, you know the South Carolina/North Carolian line.

I think this is respectful of what we've learned and I think there is a time when we need to even question whether our traditional interstate management approach to a species like red drum is valid and warranted. I think this moves us in that direction, with proper accountability measures in place to ensure that we don't violate the basic ethos of why we're here, and that is shared conservation across the board. But it also puts it back proportionately to what we know and how to manage the balance between access and opportunity in conservation.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Mel.

MR. MEL BELL: Similar to what Spud was talking about. I think Option B here kind of dovetails nicely with 3.1, in terms of flexibility for states. Not all states are, you know their coastlines are different. Some states have a lot more coastline and the possibility of isolated areas and the possibility of sub stocks.

I think the way, if I understand how this works, the state would have to provide data for their request. If there is a review from the TC there is oversight from the Board, there is review from the ASC. I don't think it could be misused, perhaps. I am a little sensitive to the concept of

sub stocks because of our cobia situation, where cobia being highly migratory.

Even though they are, you know we manage a southern cobia area within our state separately from the other parts of the state, because through genetics work and tagging work, we were able to determine its stream site fidelity for cobia in our southern sounds. I don't think it has technically been classified it, but it is basically a genetically distinct population segment.

There can be situations within these species, where the ability for a state if they have the data, they can support their argument. I think this provides them an option, and a lot of the other states won't if you don't have the coastline, the same layout, in terms of how the estuaries are set up, isolated, you know you won't have a need to do that.

I think it's a useful thing to have available for a state, again with the idea of flexibility to match the state. As Erika said, we've been operating the same way since 2001 and it's quite a few years later, and some states do have the capacity to generate the data that they need a little better than other states. I personally would be supportive of B.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I appreciate, I guess several of us have gone a few times, but this is really important and I think fundamentally important. Again, I am not trying to argue the notion that something like this needs to happen. I just think fundamentally, to just suddenly say, like the TC and, I don't even know how many people know what the ASC is, to say well that is the same as a peer review and we can move forward.

I think another reason to discuss cobia is that we may be in that situation with the SEDAR with delayed help. We may not have information on where the terminal year for that stock is for a very long time. We need this type of information. I realize we need any type of alternative information we can get. I may be looking to staff a little bit to about like the difference between a peer review vs.

what these Boards can use for additional information. Like say for cobia, I think we're going to be in a situation where we're a decade out from where the terminal year was assessed in the last peer review assessment. We need other information to make management decision. My concern here is just the way this was spelled out is like, well, it's the same as a peer review, there is a lot of rigors. I think that is a dangerous precipice to be on.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Toni.

MS. KERNS: I guess a couple things. Just a reminder to the Board that you do have the ability to ask for a peer review and a change in the peer review schedule at any point in time along the way. It goes to the Policy Board, we evaluate and if it is a major priority for a species board then that carries all the way to the Policy Board, and we do our best to adjust the schedules.

We did do peer reviews between 2001 and now for red drum. One of them the Board did not accept the results of it. I'm not saying that that is not the message that we were doing, but I just want to remind for those that weren't around then that that did happen, and it is hard science to evaluate.

When we do peer reviews we pull individuals with the expertise for that specific species, that type of modeling. There is going to be likely a higher level of expertise to evaluate that information than you are going to have from a TC or even the ASC. It is just a higher level of information as Rich said. For some of these species it is very difficult to assess, and you may need that higher level of expertise when reviewing that information.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I would add that we are speaking of one species here and perhaps this is an opportunity to test a model that we haven't used before, allowing an individual state, especially a state like Florida I think has as much

expertise and review capability as any other state along the Atlantic coast. Roy.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: Without trying to put anyone on the spot, I'm just curious what our ASC members that are in this room or Commission technical staff that perform this type of work if they are comfortable with this approach. Is it reasonable and not putting people on the spot to ask for an opinion in that regard from folks in this room?

CHAIR HAYMANS: I'll look around the room for expertise.

MR. JEFF J. KIPP: I think I would agree with how Toni put it, that the Peer Review Panels that are developed are based on specific needs for that species and assessment. I would say that the ASC is a more general body that may not have that expertise.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Any additional discussion or questions? Erika.

MS. BURGESS: I would like to say, when Florida helped bring this option forward, we consulted with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, which is part of our state agency, and Dr. Luiz Barbieri was heavily involved in crafting this. Dr. Luiz Barbieri has contributed to the advancement of marine fisheries management in the U.S. leading multiple, National Science Foundation, National Science Academy programs, has served a long time with this board and he feels very comfortable with this.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Are there any members of the public who wish to speak before we take this vote? Anyone online? Okay, we don't see anyone. With that **let's move the vote forward. I'm sorry, all those in favor raise your hand.**

MS. KERNS: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Maryland.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Opposed.

MS. KERNS: New Jersey, North Carolina.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Null, Abstentions.

MS. KERNS: Delaware.

CHAIR HAYMANS: One abstention. The motion passes 6, 2, 1, 0.

MS. KERNS: Since this passed, just going back to Ben's question that he had asked before. Is there a preference from this Board to identify that it has to be a majority vote of the Board to go to the ASC or can a single board member ask for it to go to the ASC and it automatically does? I think that clarity will be helpful in the future.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Ben, go ahead.

MR. DYER: As much as I would like to say one board member to ensure that if we're looking at these, this species under separate stocks as well sometimes within a board, that might allow some more flexibility. But I don't take lightly also the tasking of such action on ASC with just one board member. I assume I would suggest the majority vote, but I am open to hearing from my other board members.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Carrie, to that point.

MS. KENNEDY: To that point. I agree with Ben. I think especially understanding the burden that we would be asking TC members ASC members to do this work, it probably shouldn't be quite so easy to ask for this to get done. I think running it through a majority vote of the Board provides some guardrails on, you know, for lack of a better word, willy nilly tasking of the TC to just constantly be reviewing stock assessments.

MS. KERNS: I don't think that there is anything in this document that prevents a state from bringing an alternative assessment to this Board. I guess, and I didn't take this option as it was written that it's the Board's vote. Once a state brings it to the Board, then it is in front of the Board to consider.

I guess the Board could immediately vote it down to not be used, but I would assume that when a state brings it forward that it would want some guidance from the TC or the ASC, so that would just be helpful to know where that should go. As Jeff pointed out, the TC may not have the expertise to review an assessment.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I thought I heard Jeff say the opposite; the TC had more expertise than the ASC. Did I miss that?

MR. KIPP: I was speaking specifically to the ASC, which is a general body that has a member appointed from each state, and not necessarily appointed in terms of expertise in a certain area. I think that's a more generalized body. I think the Technical Committee obviously has expertise in red drum management and assessment. I think if they were uncomfortable with certain aspects that were outside their realm of expertise, that they would then, the next step would be to recommend let's go to ASC and that's where it's a more generalized body.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I think that the general question was whether a single individual, member of a board could request that to happen, or it needed to be a majority vote. I think that we've always offered a majority vote. I don't know that we've ever had a single individual push an issue, right? I would suggest its majority. But, Bob.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Yes, I think in general, you know tasking of technical committees or any subordinate group isn't done by one person, it's done by the Board, Policy Board or whatever it might be. What you said is consistent with how we operate in other species.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Roy.

MR. MILLER: I would just remind everyone that TCs are not always made up of stock assessment scientists. I would say the majority of the members probably aren't. Again, I think we would be looking to the ASC for that type of technical advice, maybe even to advise the TC.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Ben, then Spud for the last.

MR. DYAR: Roy took exactly what I was going to mention, and I would even go further to say that it might be beneficial that the ASC is somewhat of a general body, as where the TC is made up directly of folks that are focused on the subject, so taking any biases potentially out of any decisions that might be.

The ASC has that general expertise, with a little higher, as I understand, a little higher technical expertise than potentially some of the TC members. I would be very interested in almost if this process comes through, you know almost be automatic that the ASC reviews it. I don't know if that is the option.

That is what I would prefer to see, but the way the Addendum is written it is and, or we can task. But if that is the case then we are going to task, then I still stick with what Bob mentioned, and that we should do that through a majority vote, to be consistent with the way we do our processes.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Ben, if memory serves, it was written where it was automatically TCs and ASC and we decided at the last meeting that we didn't want that, it was a preference. That's where the change came. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, I just want to follow up from something that Toni said, and make sure I understand how this would work. If this was brought forward to the Board, the Board could not take an action either positive or adverse until it had gone through at least TC review. That is the way I interpreted it, there at least has to be that before the Board can just qualify it or endorse it, or recommend it go to the next step or even particularly say that based on the AFCs recommendation there needs to be a peer review.

Then we have to figure out how to get that done. Is that the sequencing of this? That's the way I understand it. I don't see how the Board

can just say, well, we think it's a bad idea, and nobody has even looked into it from a technical standpoint.

CHAIR HAYMANS: If we read Page 11 in the document, Number 2 says, the proposal to be reviewed by the TC to ensure data analysis are technically sound. The TC would evaluate states proposed action, based on whether it contributed to overfishing of the resources defined by the FMP, the public input, blah, blah, blah.

Number 3, the proposals would be presented to and approved by the Board. At that point, and I'm stepping away from the document. At that point the Board could decide it needs additional review and send it to the ASC. I'm pretty clear on how this needs to function. All right, so it goes to the TC, then to the Board. The Board decides. Okay, any additional discussion? All right, let's in the interest of time move on to 3.3.

MS. BAUER: Section 3.3, Management Program is the next topic in Draft Addendum II and may also apply to both the northern and southern regions. But again, this would apply unless otherwise specified by the Board in their motion. This issue originates from the Board's motion from the May 2025 meeting, where the Board requested the Draft Addendum consider a different level of fishing mortality states would need to implement to not exceed.

Looking at F30% instead of the current F40% that is in Amendment 2. I do want to note that addressing this request would not impact the biological reference points, such as the definition of overfishing that are found in Amendment 2. Section 3.3 provides options that specify fishing mortality level that states would need to achieve through proposed and implemented regulations.

Option A, status quo says states must implement an appropriate bag and size limit that will attain the target of 40% spawning potential ratios, SPR or F40%. Option B establishes requiring fishing mortality level of 30% SPR or F30%, which states would need to achieve to end overfishing through

proposed or implemented management measures with the target of decreasing fishing mortality below the fishing mortality associated with 40% spawning potential ratio.

The Plan Development Team had noted that if Option B is selected by the Board, then all states in the southern management stock would be required to implement regulations expected to reduce fishing mortality below the threshold of F30%. For Section 3.3 the public comment. The majority of comments were in support of maintaining the 40% spawning potential ratio as the goal. For Option B, there were a few comments that were in support of Option B. Some of the thought processes behind those who supported both Option A and Option B.

Those who submitted public comment in support of status quo, Option A, noted that F40% SPR provides an increased probability of conservation of red drum and they believe that going lower was not supportable. Multiple comments had noted that we need to keep future abundance in mind when we're setting our fishing mortality goals.

People who submitted comments in support of Option A also noted that they wanted to or thought that we needed to aggressively and proactively address the problem of declining fish stocks instead of shifting the goal posts, especially with the increasing fishing pressure from an increasing coastal population.

Several comments also noted that they wish for red drum abundance to rebound as quickly as possible, and they thought that going with status quo would achieve that. Comments that supported Option B, establishing a required fishing mortality level of 30% SPR or F30%. These comments put forward that F30% still ends overfishing, and their comments expressed their belief that the need to manage to F40% is punitive to the southern stock.

They also noted the lack of a stock recruitment relationship and how recruitment is influenced

more by environmental variables than spawning stock biomass, so they thought managing to F30 versus F40 wasn't as big of an influence on SSB, compared to environmental variables. One commenter also argued that instead of looking at F40 versus F30%, problems could be addressed through angler advocacy and cooperative partnership with state management authorities as a different route to go for red drum conservation.

The AP did provide some comments on Section 3.3. It was noted during the APs discussion that currently Section 3.3 would only apply to the southern region. However, the benchmark stock assessments are scheduled to occur approximately every five years, and as a result SPR estimates may be available in the future for the northern stocks, so Section 3.3 may impact the northern stock in the future.

One AP member abstained from a recommendation, but did express agreement with some public comment that I just went over that the environmental conditions or variables are more responsible for availability in red drum recruitment compared to the spawning stock biomass of red drum, due to that lack of the stock recruitment relationship, and again questioned whether F40% versus F30% would have a large impact on red drum abundance.

Then two AP members supported Option A, status quo, F40%. One AP member who had supported Option A had expressed concern with the motivation from switching between F40% and F30%. With that, Mr. Chair, I will hand it back over to you. That ends my overview of 3.3.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you, and once again, just a comment on the public comment, at least specific to Georgia, and I am very respectful of the public comment. But the fact that it was unanimous is interesting to me, because a lot of the individuals that I spoke to at the meeting and afterwards, were in favor of keeping our regulations where they are, which is five fish. I think they saw status quo as keeping it at five fish. There was some confusion. There was an awful lot of guys there as well who

want to see us go from five fish down to one or two fish, and they knew that 40% would get us there. Anyway, I don't know that there was a full understanding. But, let's open it up to discussion. Roy then Ben.

MR. MILLER: This may be outside of our purview as a northern *de minimis* state, but I wondered if a compromise would be possible here. Since it went to public hearing with both 40% and 30%, if someone were to propose 35% as a compromise, that is within the range of what went to public hearing, so Toni is shaking her head yes. I presume such a compromise would be okay.

MS. KERNS: Yes, Roy.

MR. MILLER: I don't know if I'm prepared to make that yet, because again, we're talking about a northern state weighing in on measures that at this point in time would apply typically to the southern region. I'll let that go for the moment, thank you.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I appreciate that sentiment, Roy, and the understanding that we are looking at separate stocks. We certainly have the option in a moment of separating this by stocks, and I hope we have some discussion to that point. Ben.

MR. DYAR: To piggyback on Roy's comment, the end of his comment of separate stocks. Given that this species is two separate stocks and a southern regional stock and a northern regional stock that are currently managed under two separate regimes, where the southern stock did have successful stock synthesis model completed and accepted for management use.

In the northern there was unsuccessful and utilizing a traffic light assessment. With the southern region having that ability to have a known SPR and where that needs to go in regards to this specific option, and then the lack thereof off to the north. I propose that we

separate this option into separate stocks and I have a motion ready for that, and I believe staff does.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Okay, thank you, Ben, I think we're pulling that motion up.

MR. DYAR: **Move to separate Issue 3.3 in Addendum II for the northern region stock.** Is it possible to add that in there, since we both use both terms? Is that helpful throughout the document, so the southern region stock? **And the southern region stock so that the decision is independent for each region's preferred management program.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Is the motion as we want it? Ben is the motion as you want it?

MR. DYAR: Yes.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Is there a second? Spud. Discussion on the motion, Ben, do you want to add anything else?

MR. DYAR: I don't have much to add. I believe, as I mentioned, currently right now this is directly affecting and impacting the southern stock, as we do have the ability to measure and manage to the threshold, whatever is decided, where currently that is not achievable in the northern region.

I would leave that maybe to them to decide the northern stock region and how they would prefer to move forward, once they have the ability to assess that stock and create a stock assessment to determine SPR, to know where that stock is sitting, to then make those decisions as they move forward. But it's again, being managed completely separate regimes right now currently, so I think it's prudent to separate these stocks for this specific option.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you, Spud, anything to add?

MR. WOODWARD: No, I think he pretty much explained the logic behind this, and I do think when you do have a situation where you've got a dichotomy in your scientific advice, that giving

yourself the ability to tweak those two situations differently, it's just a prudent common-sense approach to management.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Adam.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: Would a vote in the affirmative for this essentially create F40% as status quo for both regions stocks as a starting point or where does that leave F as a starting point for those regions if we vote in the affirmative here?

CHAIR HAYMANS: That's the way I would read it, it's currently F40%. I would suggest that status quo remains the same for both stocks.

MS. BAUER: Yes, that is correct, Adam.

MS. KERNS: I hear this as the Board saying you want to be able to vote separately on the answer to that question. Here you are just saying, we are going to take two separate votes, one for the northern region and one for the southern region. If the northern region does not want to change from 40% then you don't have to vote at all, and it will stay that way. If the southern region wants to change then they need a motion to change that.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I think that is Adam's point is that status quo is 40 for both at this point. Ben.

MR. DYAR: That was my intention with the motion was to just go ahead and separate and then have two separate votes, or if again the northern stock prefers to stay exactly as you are, as Toni said. That was my intention.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Any additional discussion on this motion? Anyone in the public or online? Seeing none; **is there any opposition? I see one opposed.**

MS. KERNS: North Carolina is opposed.

CHAIR HAYMANS: All right, now let's consider. Let's take the southern stock first. Is there any

discussion on Option A or B for the southern stock?

MS. BURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I would like to make a motion and then I'll explain my rationale.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Go right ahead.

MS. BURGESS: I would like to **move to adopt Option B for the Southern Stock for Section 3.3.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Second by Spud Woodward. Rationale, Erika.

MS. BURGESS: I observed the same thing in public comment. I saw and heard again and again that this Option B in Section 3.3 was moving the goalpost, when in fact the goalpost remained the same. The goal is to get to F40, the threshold is to get to F30. We just approved an option for Section 3.1 that said that the goal and the requirements would be to end overfishing.

Achieving F30 would end overfishing for this stock, so this option gets to where we said we need to get to now, like this is what we need to achieve and this is the ultimate utmost importance. Florida had changed regulations to be more conservative, closing off essentially half of our coastline where red drum occur, and making it catch and release only, based on habitat conditions and declining suitability for red fish in that area.

The northern section of our state we reduced the bag limit in half; we reduced the vessel limit in half. We have the most conservative regulations for that in the southern stock. We have a slot limit, we're fishing on one year class of fish, and we don't yet have the ability to fully evaluate the impact of those changes.

Setting F30 does not prevent a state, should they so choose, setting that as a requirement does not prevent a state should they so choose from going above and beyond that. It merely says every state agrees that we will end overfishing collectively, and that is the most important thing that we achieve today.

CHAIR HAYMANS: The seconder, any additional?

MR. WOODWARD: Just a couple of things to emphasize. One is again like she said, we are binding ourself to ending overfishing. But what this decision would do is give us, you know a state like Georgia, greater flexibility to ameliorate any negative socioeconomic consequences, bridging that gap between 30 and 40.

I think our plan in Georgia is to recommend bag and size limits that will move us about halfway between 30 and 40. It is respectful of the target, but it also gives us again some flexibility to move things forward without having unnecessary adverse consequences.

CHAIR HAYMANS: To that point and to Roy's question earlier. Georgia is targeting 35 is our direction, and that is based on the fact that there is strong political opposition to going below a certain number of fish. There is an awful lot of people out there who still want to put fish in their coolers and not just catch and release, and I have to be mindful of that. Going to 40, I can't respect those two options, but 35 I am trying to find right now in my state. Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: I am opposed to this motion. I think the 40% target has served the species pretty well, considering it's long lived and the management strategy of harvesting juveniles and not harvesting the adults. Managing to the 30% threshold even by going a little higher is risk prone for the life history and management.

It is also risk prone when you consider that noncompliant harvest isn't being considered for harvest reduction calculations for the southern population, making these calculations less conservative. Although the Board chose not to factor increasing fishing effort in the future, the Board must consider the improvements in fishing gear, technology and information available to anglers, which makes catching fish

like red drum much easier compared to the past.

This can increase the chances of anglers recouping the harvest under more restrictive regulations, so therefore managing to the 40% target increases the chances of meeting this management objective in the addendum. Then finally, just regarding public comment. Although I can't speak for the anglers in Georgia, I think the public clearly understood this issue when they supported status quo, and there was more than just fishing guides.

There was a wide range of stakeholders. This is a species that we really manage for abundance. In the south it is entirely a recreational fishery and largely a catch and release. Going to 30% I think really compromises the long-term viability of this stock, and also doesn't really meet what this fishery really is, it's one that is driven by abundance.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Anyone else? Roy.

MR. MILLER: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman for requesting another opportunity to comment, but very quickly. This puts us in a scenario that has been discussed previously, and I'm still not sure how it was resolved. Specifically, is it appropriate for a northern state to vote on an issue that pertains to a southern stock? Is there any guidance from our Commission Guiding Documents on this, at this point in time?

CHAIR HAYMANS: At this point in time, no. That is why we established a Working Group. It's just the Working Group is about six months behind this vote, unfortunately. I hope that, well, I won't put that out there. Bob.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: I would answer exactly how you answered it, with one addition is that it is up to the individual members of the Board. If they feel that this isn't something that is appropriate for them and they want to abstain, they have every ability to do that.

CHAIR HAYMANS: We are running short on allotted time. If there is any other discussion, any from the

public, online. Seeing none; let's call the question. **All those in favor of the motion, raise your hand.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: I'll call them out. Florida, Georgia, Virginia and PRFC. I think that is all.

CHAIR HAYMANS: All those opposed.

MS. KERNS: North Carolina, South Carolina.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Abstentions.

MS. KERNS: New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland.

CHAIR HAYMANS: And nulls. I see 4, 2, 2, 0 the motion passes. I'm sorry, oh 3 abstentions, thank you. Okay, let's consider the northern stock then. Discussion on the northern stock. Is there a motion for the northern stock? Dave.

MR. DAVID SIKORSKI: My apologies to staff, I did not provide text to you, but for Section 3.4 I would like to move Option B.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Dave, we're still in 3.3.

MR. SIKORSKI: I'm sorry, I'm trying to get out of here, I'm sorry. I'm going to Annapolis tonight and my head isn't here.

CHAIR HAYMANS: If there is no motion it maintains, so any interest in from the Board 3.3 northern stock. Seeing none then the northern stock would remain at status quo. Okay, let's move to 3.4. Dave, we should have Tracey tell us about 3.4 first.

MS. BAUER: All right, Section 3.4. Obviously, this would apply only to the northern region. Again, the inclusion of this issue in the Addendum is due to some of the concern of the increasing fishing mortality in the northern region, despite the stock assessment saying that it was not overfished and not overfishing was occurring.

That increasing fishing mortality sort of what prompted the Board and some stakeholders to think about taking some preemptive action to control the fishing mortality in the northern stock. For Section 3.4, northern region management options, Option A is status quo, which would be no required changes to current management measures in the northern region.

Option B would be Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions modifications. As it reads is, all Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions would establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board specified bag limit of either 3, 2 or 1 fish per person per day, and establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board specified slot limit between 18- and 26-inches total length. Finally, Option C is North Carolina slot limit modifications, and this would be specific to North Carolina slot, as North Carolina's bag limit is currently at 1 fish per person per day, and it would require North Carolina to establish measures limiting recreational harvest to a Board-specified size limit between 18 and 26 inches. For public comment for this option. For Option A, status quo. Several commenters supported status quo for North Carolina. Specifically, there were 8 written comments and 5 comments at public hearings that supported status quo for North Carolina.

Then for Option B and C there were many commenters that expressed support for modifying the regulations in the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions or states, and changes to the North Carolina slot. Moving on to public comments. Again, for those who supported status quo for North Carolina specifically, they did not believe there were any issues with North Carolina's red drum population, or enough evidence to say changes needed to be made.

They argued that North Carolina regulations have been in place for a long time and have been working. One commenter also advocated that further public input is needed in North Carolina before regulation changes can be made. In addition, one organization expressed some apprehension with making changes to the northern

stock without following the process in 3.1, and wanted to make sure there was some flexibility for these states too.

However, they did acknowledge it would be helpful to align the red drum regulations for the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions. For those who supported Option B, Chesapeake Bay Jurisdiction Modifications. They expressed concern for recent trends in declining red drum abundance and confirmed observations of increasing fishing effort in the Chesapeake Bay due to declines of other species.

Commenters expressed support for being proactive to preempt further increases in fishing mortality and to prevent bigger problems later. In addition, commenters who supported Option B want to ensure that red drum fishing in these states or jurisdictions remain sustainable. Several comments also mentioned the recent cold kill of red drum in Chesapeake Bay as part of their concern, with the impacts that it had on a population, and managing red drum from that.

Lastly, again they did mention that it would align management across the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions and simplify management enforcement. For specific regs mentioned in the public comments, there was support for anywhere between 2 to 3 fish bag limits, and a majority of comments supported an 18-to-26-inch slot.

The comments who supported Option B supported North Carolina regulation changes as a part of being proactive to protect the northern stock as a whole, and to reduce fishing pressure on the resource. For those who did express support for Option C, they supported a 19-to-25-inch slot, which according to the calculations we were able to do would achieve 11% reduction for North Carolina specifically.

Issue 3.4 was the other section that the AP was able to comment on at their meeting. One AP member supported Option A, status quo over

all. One AP member supported Option A, status quo for North Carolina specifically, and again without an estimate of spawning potential ratio for the northern stock the AP member noted that there was no way to properly assess whether the northern stock was above or below the threshold. He also noted that North Carolina has had their current red drum regulations for over 15 year and he thought that most people in North Carolina believe that red drum are still highly abundant. Therefore, with the spawning potential ratio unknown in the northern stock and due to increasing numbers of the adult population in a long-lived species.

This AP member supported status quo for North Carolina regulations. Then lastly, one AP member expressed support for Option B, specifically an 18-to-26-inch total length slot and a 2 fish bag limit for all three Chesapeake Bay states jurisdictions. That brings my summary of Section 3.4 to a close.

CHAIR HAYMENS: Thank you, Tracey, and we are very short on time. Joe Grist.

MR. GRIST: Noting that we are short on time there is a motion prepared, but I would like to allow my joint Bay jurisdiction in Maryland to make a modification to it once it is on the screen.

CHAIR HAYMENS: Very well, I believe that is Carrie and motion on the screen.

MS. KENNEDY: Yes, I through this whole conversation lost track of the idea that we also have a lot, not a lot, but fishermen on our coast that are fishing for red drum. If we change Chesapeake Bay regulations in Maryland to be consistent, as proposed potentially here in this motion, we're probably going to need to also change what's happening on our coast.

I think that is important in an effort to improve our recreational data if we have a mismatch on our coast from what's happening in the Chesapeake Bay, then we're setting ourselves up to sort of mess with our already data poor MRIP numbers and I think that also for enforcement it's important for

consistent rules. I would want not only for these rules to apply to the Chesapeake Bay portion of Maryland, but also to the coast.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Carrie, couldn't Maryland do that themselves without it being directive of this Board and not be out of compliance? Toni.

MS. KERNS: Yes, they can and we've been talking about this option within the document itself anyway. I guess it depends on how you read the language. I think it's a little squishy as to whether it means just the Bay portion of your states or the whole state. I was interpreting it as the whole state, but I could see how someone may interpret it as the state, just the Bay.

But I think one of the intentions as you just stated of the document was to have consistent measures with shared waterbodies, shared states or adjoining states. You said on the record that you intend to have the same regs, and I think you're good there, and that notion is there and we can make sure that it is the meeting summary and is there if you would like.

MS. KENNEDY: Yes, so just to follow up. We can always do that. I think it's important for this Board to understand that as a body we are voting on having consistent rules across the jurisdictional states and PRFC, in an effort to improve our estimates. By allowing that sort of lack of clarity we are not addressing clearly the intent to have consistent rules to improve our recreational estimates.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Dave.

MR. SIKORSKI: I wonder if it might help just to remove the words, setting the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions in the parentheses, and instead just say that we're setting the red drum Draft Addendum Section 3.4 for Virginia, Maryland and PRFC recreational measures for red drum. Then it is automatically where we have jurisdiction to manage these fish, which are our state waters and/or shared water body of the Potomac.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Well, it's still Carrie's motion, it hasn't been seconded yet. Well, I thought Joe recognized Maryland to make the motion. It hasn't been seconded yet so Carrie, craft it how you would like.

MR. SIKORSKI: Carrie says what I said. **Motion to adopt Option B of Section 3.4 of the Red Drum Draft Addendum II, setting the Virginia, Maryland, and PRFC recreational measures for red drum as an 18"-26" slot with a 3 fish per person possession limit.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Very good, and we have a second by Mr. Brown, Owens, I'm so sorry. When you only comment once a week. All right, we have a motion we have a second, is there additional discussion? Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, I am opposed to this motion. Going back to the objectives in Draft Addendum II for the northern population. One was to consider changes to the recreational bag limits and slot limits to the northern region of red drum to address increasing fishing mortality, and we saw just that in the northern region during the last two years of the stock assessment, and that harvest has only increased more since that terminal year.

These existing regs here are among those that were developed through the Vaughan and Carmichael SPR analysis, and they are arguably less restrictive compared to the existing regulations, and it was already stated before that using that analysis from 2001 is no longer the best available science.

It's concerning in addition to that, because the stock assessment for the northern population has very little data available for this part of the region. Basically, all the fishery independent surveys are from North Carolina, and there is no Wave 1 MRIP catch estimates north of North Carolina, and we know that Wave 1 catch of red drum occurs in Virginia.

It was already mentioned that red drum died from the very cold-water temps in the Bay this year. Therefore, I would like to make the following

substitute motion for the states, and that is a slot limit of 19 to 25 inches and a three-fish bag limit, and if I get a second, I will provide just a little more rationale.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Mr. Batsavage does that reflect your motion?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, it does.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Is there a second? It's a motion to amend. It's a motion to amend, it's not a complete substitute it's amending the motion. Is there a second? Seeing no second the amendment fails. Back to the main. Any additional discussion on the main? Dave.

MR. SIKORSKI: I know we're short on time but I just want to give a few quick points. I think dropping the bag limit in the Potomac provides some conservation savings. In my experience as a Maryland angler that is where you are going to find the highest abundance of juvenile red drum, which are in the slot. Going from that 5 fish bag limit down to 3 is a savings.

Of course, Maryland is going from a 1 fish bag limit up to 3, but we have these fish coming through one year class in that slot, with a small window in the middle of the year. Twice in the last 15 years we've had catchable, legal red drum in Chesapeake Bay waters for recreational anglers. I think what's most important, 5% of the Bay harvest.

There you go, some technical information that is really important. The reality is we have a lot of work to do to better analyze this stock and understand what is happening in the Chesapeake Bay with it, especially in Maryland waters as we see it increase in abundance. We're committed to doing that as best we can, and so I think this smooths things out for recreational anglers and we need that in this space right now, so call the question, please.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Any discussion from the public or online? Seeing none; let's call the

question. **All those in favor of the motion raise your hand.**

MS. KERNS: Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia. Pennsylvania is not on this Board.

CHAIR HAYMANS: All those opposed.

MS. KERNS: North Carolina.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Abstentions.

MS. KERNS: New Jersey, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Delaware.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Nulls, the final tally is 3 to 1, is that what I saw?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Okay, very good. Thank you, so that motion passes. Do we need to tackle Option C for North Carolina? No need to tackle C, that moves us to 3.5.

MS. BAUER: Section 3.5 is *de minimis* provisions. This will apply to both the northern and southern regions. The purpose of this section is to basically update the *de minimis* provisions that are in Amendment 2 to meet the requirements of the 2022 *de minimis* policy that the Policy Board put into place. Status quo would be continuing to have no specified *de minimis* requirements that are found in Amendment 2. Option B of Section 3.5 would update the *de minimis* provisions to align with the guidelines in the 2022 *de minimis* policy, and it would consider a date *de minimis* if the average total landings, commercial and recreational together for the last three years is less than 1% of the total landings from its respective region. *De minimis* would be split regionally with Option B.

It has not been done that way thus far for any Commission species, but it has been proposed for this for red drum due to the separate stock assessments and separate stocks. Option B also outlines a process that could be used in the future if

we ever do need to establish regulations for *de minimis* states.

The PRT and the TC could recommend measures for *de minimis* states and the Board would review that recommendation and approve, which the states would then implement and other guidelines in Amendment 2, including the states, must include *de minimis* requests as part of their annual compliance reports would still apply under this option.

Public comments for this option are very straightforward. The AP did not comment on it, but all comments we received in regards to Section 3.5 were in favor of Option B, as it would modernize red drum management. With that I can hand that back over to you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Well, thank you, Tracey, and I know there was an awful lot of support for *de minimis* 1% 3, but we really haven't answered the question whether *de minimis* is going to apply coastwide or to the stock.

MS. BAUER: Yes, we decided that last time.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Oh, we did. I guess I missed that, apologies. Discussion on the 3.5. Is there a motion for 3.5? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: **I move we approve Option B to update *De minimis* Provisions to Section 3.5.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Second from Mel, any discussion? Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I'm not going to object necessarily, but for two other species and any species that are kind of the harvest is MRIP estimates are the motivating factor, a 1% is a very interesting threshold to deal with. We talked earlier about how we would need to have a discussion on a 1% threshold for croaker and spot.

I think it's a little weird to be putting ourselves in this position that we're going to say that now, when I have not looked at what that means for the red drum stocks and regions. But I do know that for two other sciaenids we discussed it. We may need to revisit that. I am a little concerned with this motion, but thank you.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Tracey.

MS. BAUER: To that point we will, I have started the process of gathering all the PRTs for all of the sciaenid species, to look into that question. Even though we're putting the 1% into place here, that is something we are going to be working to look into more holistically for all of the sciaenid species of is that 1% appropriate or not?

MR. NOWALSKY: Just what I believe is a cleanup note on this section. The document referenced sub-options and we didn't wind up with sub-options, so the final version would not reflect that I would assume.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you for that. Roy.

MR. MILLER: Just for clarity, Mr. Chairman. As I read this it says the PRT and/or the TC would recommend commercial and recreational measures for *de minimis* states. That leaves it entirely up to them? I presume the states would have the ability to recommend something, in terms of baseline measures. Are we saying that the PRT and the TC would have to approve that?

MS. BAUER: What the TC or PRT put forward would only be recommendations to the Board, but the state would probably be the main focus of putting forward that or in a discussion of what is appropriate, compared to like states that are already *de minimis* with measures like New Jersey and Delaware.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Anyone else? Seeing none; public, online? None, let's call the question. **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none; the motion passes.** Next, we need to deal with

implementation of this Addendum. Do we have a motion for implementation, a time certain? Ben.

MR. DYAR: I would like to make a motion to set an implementation date of August 2026.

CHAIR HAYMANS: While they are working to put that motion up, just to let you know we are going to tackle Agenda Item Number 5 via an online vote, and we will hear from CJ in just a moment and try to.

MS. KERNS: Ben, if you could work with us a little bit and have the Board work with us a little bit. When would the states put their proposals in first? I believe, if I'm correct, South Carolina and Georgia would need to propose some measures, and then the Board would consider those measures, and then everything would be in place by August 31, is what I think you're saying?

MR. DYER: Correct, working backwards I'm not sure about. The second suggested proposal date but implementation date would be August 31, so working backwards from that what we need.

MS. KERNS: We could review those proposals in May, would that work for this Board for those two states, or would you want to submit proposals for the February meeting and be reviewed then?

CHAIR HAYMANS: Speaking for my state it's going to be interesting, because I have to get past whatever I propose and that's not a certain. We could certainly provide to you in the spring what our intentions are, and my intention would be to have it implemented by the August date.

MS. KERNS: Do you think you could submit something by March 1st? What is it that you all want to submit your proposals so the TC can review and then present to the Board?

CHAIR HAYMANS: I would say May 1st.

MS. KERNS: The spring meeting would be that first week of May, so we would need it ahead of that. We would need it either, if we knew it was coming April 1st, we could do that, because we could preestablish the TC meeting immediately, but we would really need them to be on time.

MS. BAUER: Just as a reminder, the proposals don't have to have your final options selected in it. You can have several different options you're considering if you don't know exactly what it's going to be yet, and all of those can get approved. Then you can select which one later.

CHAIR HAYMANS: I'm looking to my southerners in the back, because they are conferring. Ben.

MR. DYAR: Sorry, we were talking so I didn't hear what you needed, Doug, but May is good with us or April/May timeframe for submitting proposals works for South Carolina.

CHAIR HAYMANS: In order to make the May meeting it needs to be earlier than that, so April 1st would be the submission of proposals, and then an implementation by and we've always worked off the first of the month. I've never seen us do the end of the month. August 1st or September 1st.

MR. DYAR: Sounds good to me.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Okay, make it September 1st. Okay, very good. We have a motion, Ben, would you reread that motion, please?

MR. DYAR: **Move to set the following implementation schedule for Section 3.3 and 3.4: States to submit proposals by April 1, 2026. The Board will review and consider approval of proposals at the Spring 2026 Commission meeting, and States to implement regulations by September 1, 2026.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Thank you and a second by Dave. Any additional discussion? Seeing none; **is there**

any opposition? Seeing no opposition, motion passes and that concludes.

CONSIDER FINAL APPROVAL OF ADDENDUM II

CHAIR HAYMANS: We have to approve it, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah that's important. Malcolm, do you have a motion?

DR. MALCOLM RHODES: Just a quick point. I love the schedule and I think it can be done, but South Carolina, all the regulations are legislatively mandated, so we will be going to the Legislature starting in November, and it has to go through the House and Senate Subcommittees before it goes to the Legislature. While we're going to be trying to hit this time table, if we're not, it is not because of our efforts.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Understood. I think we will hold the compliance letter, knowing that you are moving forward. Motion, all right, Joe Grist.

MR. GRIST: **Move to implement Draft Addendum II as modified today.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: Second by Dave Sikorski. Approve, move to approve. All right, let's get with the maker and the seconder. Joe Grist, Dave Sikorski. Any discussion? Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Since I've been on the losing side of almost every vote this week, I may as well continue my losing streak. But I am going to oppose this Addendum just for the same reasons as I opposed the Striped Bass Addendum yesterday. I think the decisions made for red drum in both regions are very risk prone, considering the life history of the stock.

I'm afraid we're going to find ourselves in the worst situation when we look at this again. I hope I'm wrong, but we've seen red drum at low populations before under management measures that were deemed later inappropriate. I don't think we really moved the ball enough to protect this stock long term.

CHAIR HAYMANS: **All those in favor.**

MS. KERNS: **New Jersey, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Maryland, Delaware.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: **Opposed.**

MS. KERNS: **North Carolina.**

CHAIR HAYMANS: **Abstentions, nulls. Seeing none; the Addendum is approved.** Thank you all very much for that.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON 2026 ATLANTIC CROAKER BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

CHAIR HAYMANS: C.J. let's go to Item 6 for the Update on the Atlantic Croaker Benchmark.

DR. C.J. CARROLL SCHLICK: Hello, everyone, I am the SAS Chair for the current assessment for Atlantic Croaker and Spot. Just as a reminder, when we lost our lead analyst due to job changes early in this assessment the SAS recommended that we decouple the croaker and spot assessments and focus on croaker first, while picking up spot assessment once croaker was completed. Most of this update will pertain specifically to croaker.

The last update to the Board occurred at the Spring 2025 meeting, where we mentioned we are moving with modeling two separate stocks for Atlantic croaker, a Mid-Atlantic stock, which is Carteret County North Carolina northward, any South Atlantic stock, which is anything south of Carteret County through the East Coast of Florida. If that is completed the data reviews on April 28 and May 22 to discuss the various data sources and life history traits for each stock separately, with special attention to the southern stock, as most of the data sources had been previously excluded.

The SAS met again on July 29 to discuss regional model configurations, while keeping in mind some past model stability issues with moving forward with the model. We also created two subcommittees from the SAS; the first one is a

modeling subcommittee that is meeting biweekly to discuss model progress. There is progress with both models. We have two running models. However, not all data sources have been incorporated yet, and there are will some diagnostic issues we're working through at this time.

The models are not yet ready for an assessment workshop, but we should be ready early in 2026. A second subcommittee was created, which was an environmental subcommittee. It was formed on July 29, and this was to address research and analyses and the terms of reference that are not directly addressed by the stock assessment model. Topics include environmental and non-fishing impacts on croaker populations that can't be captured in the models at this time.

The Subcommittee has met twice and is moving forward with examining the most recent literature and additional data analyses to answer these questions of interest. The Committee will meet one more time this year to progress with the analyses and provide write ups for the report within the stock assessment. The current timeline, even though we have pushed the Assessment Workshop into January or February of 2026, the remainder of the timeline should be fairly well on track.

We are intending to go to peer review sometime in May of 2026, and still believe that the assessment will be ready for the Board in August of 2026. As a reminder, we will begin spot once croaker goes through the peer review process. Our intent is to start the spot assessment in May 2026 and go through peer review sometime in April or May of 2027 and present spot assessment to the Sciaenids Board in August 2027. This is just a brief update, but I will gladly take any questions that you may have.

CHAIR HAYMANS: Any questions for C.J.?
Seeing none.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR HAYMANS: Having moved Agenda Item 5 to online and we have no other business, motion to adjourn. Hands everywhere. We are adjourned, thank you very much.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.
on Thursday, October 30, 2025)