



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Tautog Management Board
FROM: James Boyle, FMP Coordinator
DATE: April 28, 2026
SUBJECT: Tautog Advisory Panel Review of 2025 Stock Assessment Update

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

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

ASMFC Staff: James Boyle, Katie Drew, Samara Nehemiah

2025 Tautog Stock Assessment Update

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

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

Draft Addendum I

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

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

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