

Tautog Technical Committee Report on Board Tasks

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Tautog Technical Committee Chair

May 4, 2026

- Report on Board Tasks
 - Projections to Reach Fishing Mortality Target
 - Risk & Uncertainty Decision Tool
 - Delaware-Maryland-Virginia Fishery-Independent Data
- Request for Board guidance on timing of next steps



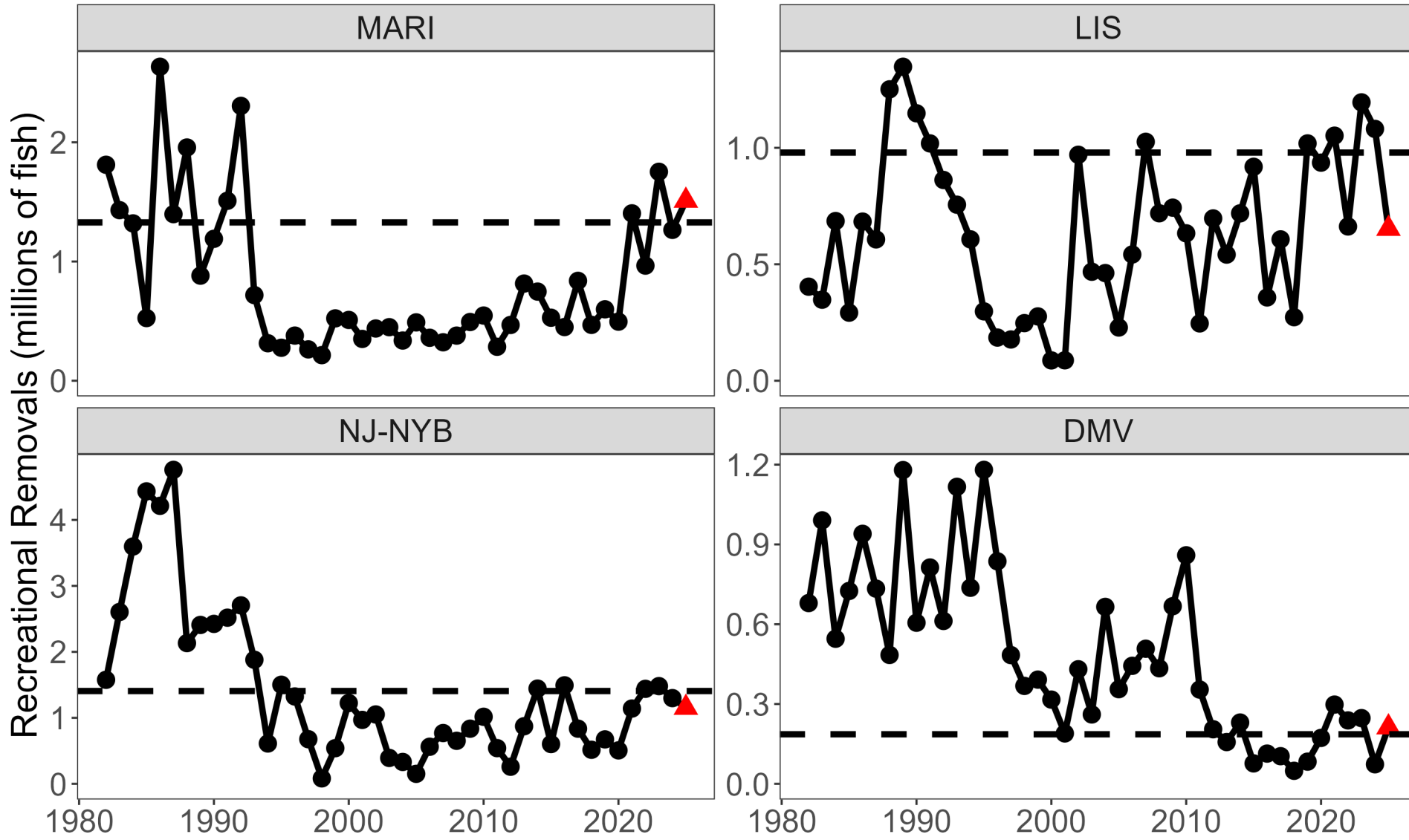
Projections

- 2025 Stock assessment update found that overfishing was occurring the NJ-NYB and DMV regions, which requires a management response

Region	F Status	SSB Status
MARI	Not overfishing	Not overfished
LIS	Not overfishing	Not overfished
NJ-NYB	Overfishing	Not overfished
DMV	Overfishing	Overfished

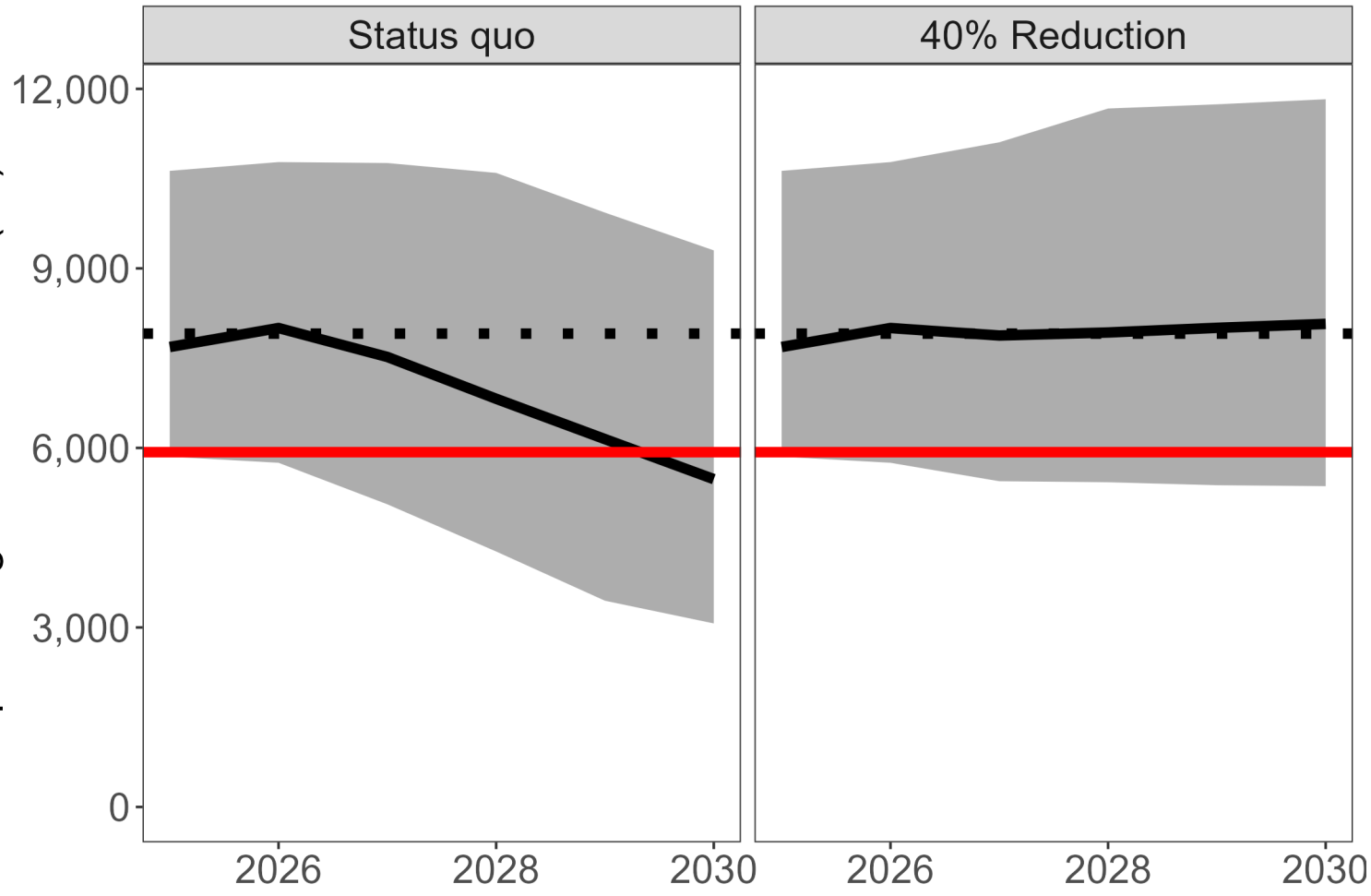
- To address overfishing in NJ-NYB and DMV, the Board requested projections that had a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2028 or 2030
- Board also requested the TC use the Commission's Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool to calculate an alternate probability for achieving the F target

- Used the most recent 3-year average catch for 2025 and 2026, and then calculated what level of catch in 2027 and 2028 (or 2027-2030) would be needed to have a 50% probability of being at or below the F target in 2028 (or 2030)
- Calculated the percent reduction by comparing the level of catch needed for 2027-2030 to the 3-year average (2022-2024)

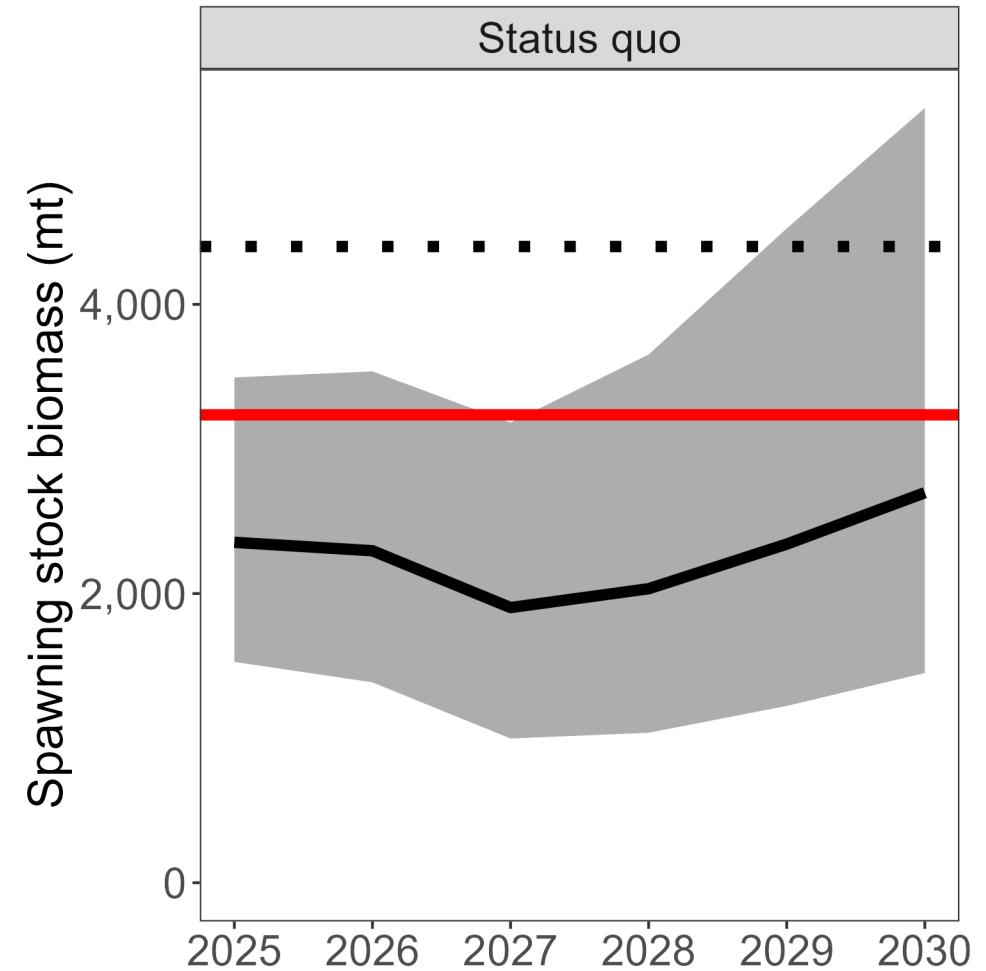


NJ-NYB Region			
Target Year	Probability Definition	Probability of Achieving F Target	Percent Reduction in Removals Needed
2028	FMP Minimum	50%	44%
2030	FMP Minimum	50%	40%
DMV Region			
Target Year	Probability Definition	Probability of Achieving F Target	Percent Reduction in Removals Needed
2028	FMP Minimum	50%*	0%
2030	FMP Minimum	50%*	0%

NJ-NYB



DMV



Reference Points ■ SSB Target — SSB Threshold



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Risk & Uncertainty Tool

- TC provides scores for uncertainty and risk
 - Stock status
 - Model uncertainty
 - Management uncertainty
 - Environmental uncertainty
 - Ecosystem importance
- Results in a recommended probability for F being at or below the F target in 2028 or 2030 (higher than 50% for both regions)
- TC calculates reductions associated with those probabilities

- Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS) provides scores on socioeconomic considerations:
 - Commercial and recreational importance of the tautog fishery in each region
 - The short-term and long-term impacts of the reductions associated with the TC's scores

- The TC and CESS scores are weighted based on scores provided by the Board about how important each factor is in its management decisions
 - Provided during the 2021 update and initial pilot testing of the tool

Risk & Uncertainty Tool

NJ-NYB Region

Target Year	Probability Definition	Probability of Achieving F Target	Percent Reduction in Removals Needed
2028	R&U Tool	64%	50%
2030	R&U Tool	64%	44%

DMV Region

Target Year	Probability Definition	Probability of Achieving F Target	Percent Reduction in Removals Needed
2028	R&U Tool	66%	8%
2030	R&U Tool	66%	4%

→ The Board can adjust the weights on all categories and the socioeconomic scores to change the recommended probabilities, but it cannot be less than 50%

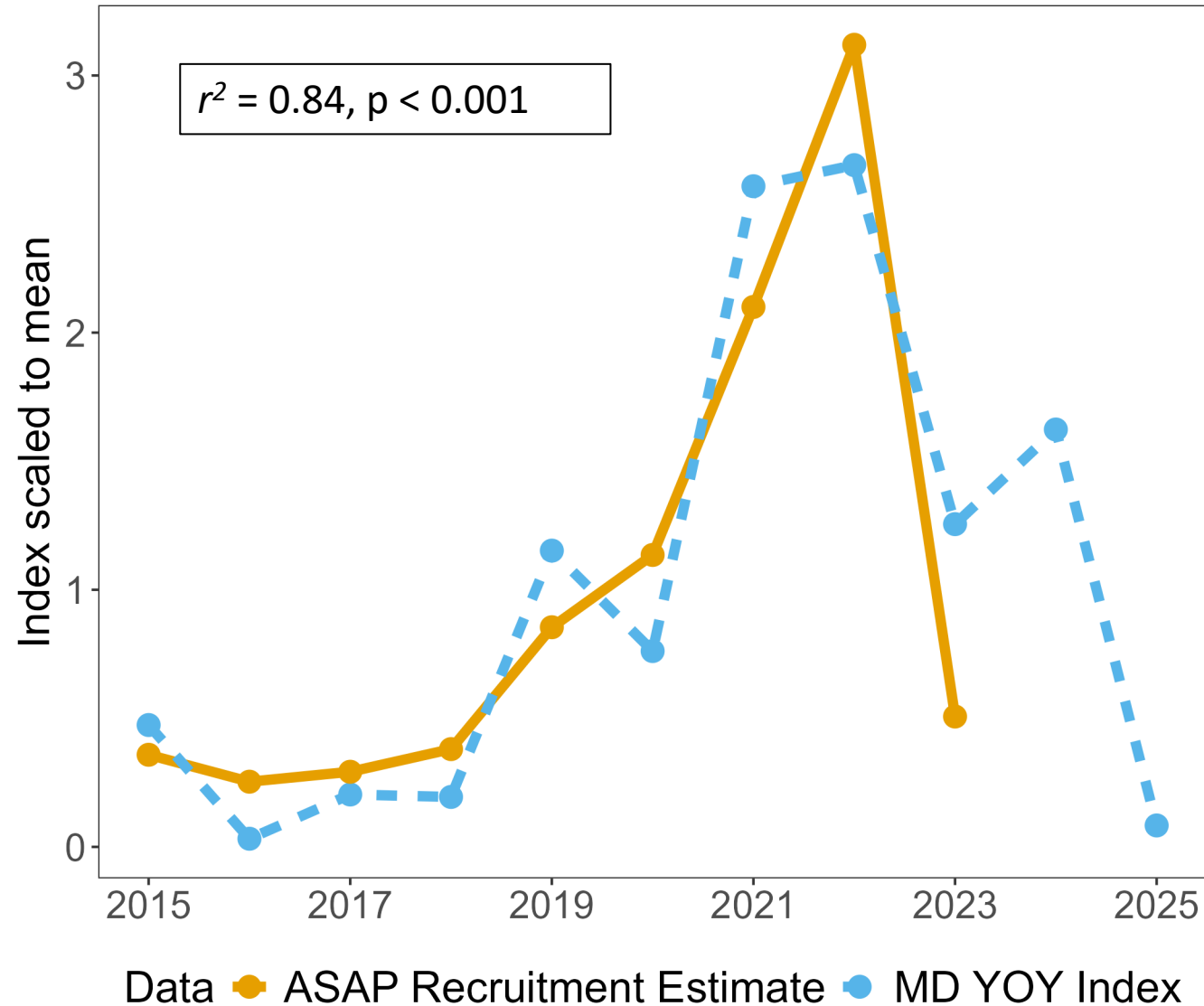


DMV Indices

- Current stock assessment model only uses one fishery-dependent CPUE index, since none of the fishery-independent indices available during the benchmark assessment captured tautog reliably
- Since then, MD and DE have started new surveys that are more suitable for monitoring tautog

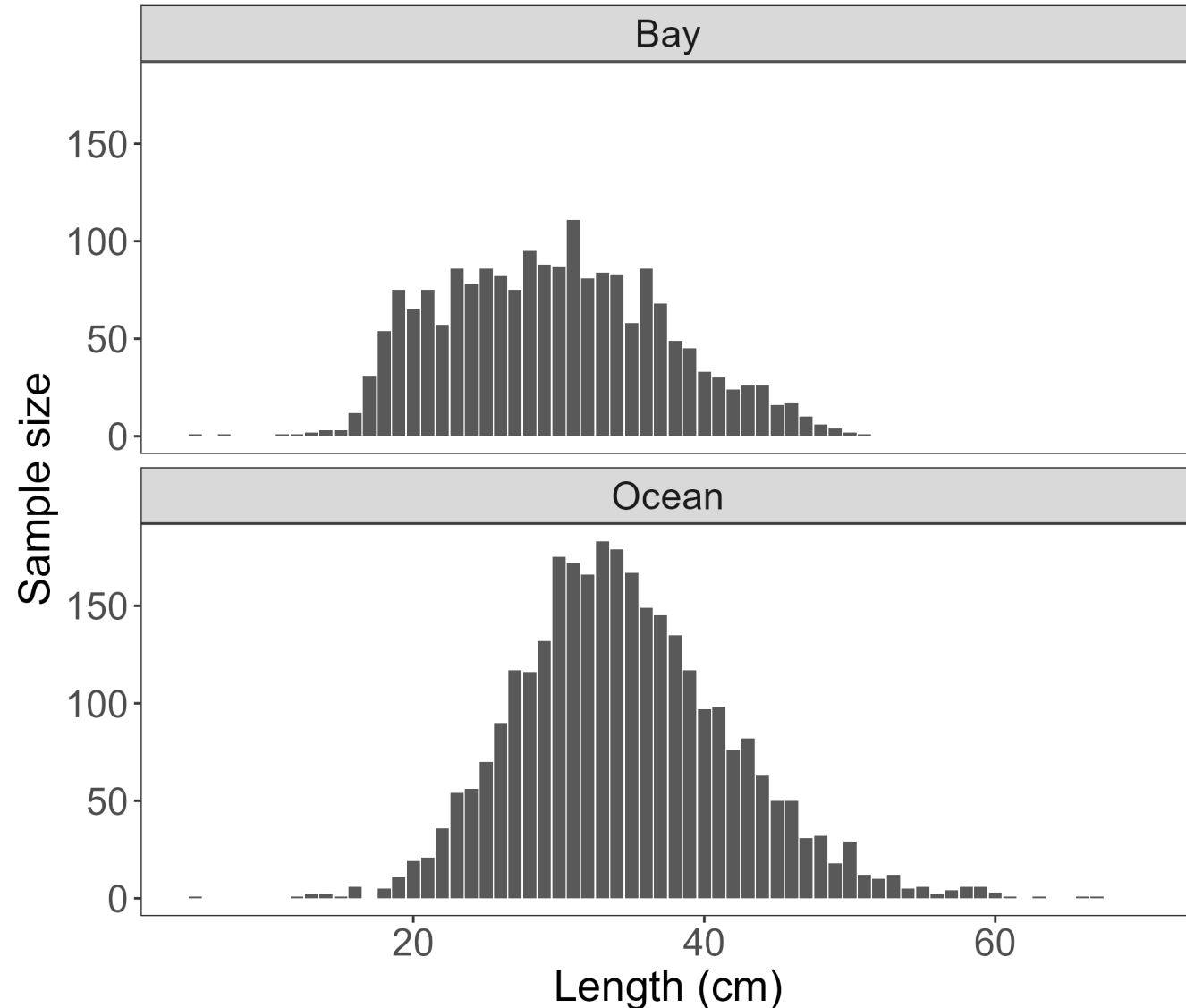
MD DNR SAV Habitat Survey

- Piloted starting in 2012, standardized methods since 2015
- Haul seine targeting YOY fish in SAV habitat
- Successful in capturing young-of-year (YOY) tautog, with 65% of all hauls positive for tautog
- Well-correlated with the assessment's estimate of recruitment



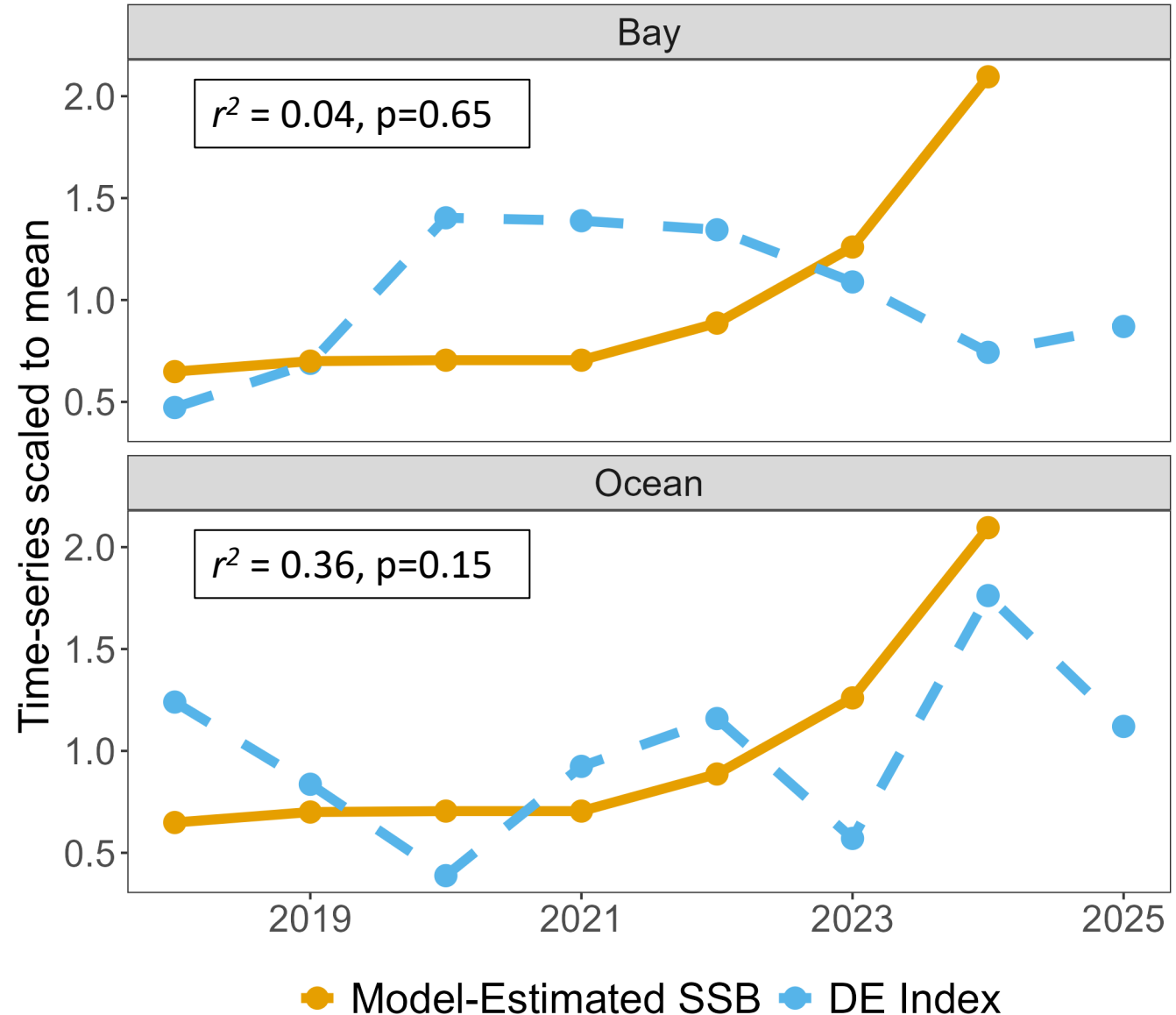
DE Ventless Trap Survey

- Started in 2018
- Ventless traps deployed in DE Bay and ocean waters on both high relief (artificial reefs) and low relief (sandy bottom) habitat
- 64%-83% positive sets in high relief habitat
- Captures both juvenile and adult tautog



DE Ventless Trap Survey

- Index in both regions has been variable without a significant trend from 2018-2025
- No strong correlation with the assessment estimates of SSB, but selectivity effects make it harder to compare across an index with multiple ages



- TC/SAS recommends bringing both indices forward for including in the next benchmark assessment
- MD YOY index provides empirical support for the model's estimates of increasing recruitment in recent years
- DE index is flatter and does not show the same strong increasing pattern in SSB that the model is estimating

Next Benchmark Timing

- Work starts: late 2026/early 2027
- Peer review: 2029
- High priority objectives:
 - Investigate and resolve the retrospective issues
 - Incorporate new fishery-independent surveys, including pot-and-trap surveys and the YOY index for the DMV region
 - Incorporate recalibrated MRIP numbers



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Board Guidance for TC/SAS

Wait for MRIP Recalibration or Not?

- The assessment and projections will not be updated with the new MRIP data
- The new length frequency, catch-per-trip, and catch by wave data could be used to develop size limit, bag limit, and season limit options for the addendum
- Waiting for the recalibrated data (anticipated delivery: August) would delay implementation
 - Projections would need to be updated to assume status quo for 2025-2027 instead of 2025-2026 which may change the percent reduction needed
 - Would still use uncalibrated status quo numbers to align with assessment



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Questions

Tautog PDT Guidance and Advisory Panel Report

May 4, 2026

- Nichole Ares (RI)
- Kelli Mosca (CT)
- Rachel Sysak (NY)
- Shakira Goffe (VA)
- Ben Wasserman (DE)
- Tyler Harris (NJ)
- James Boyle (ASMFC)

Advisory Panel Meeting April 21, 2026:

- 2 AP members in attendance (NY and DE)
- Reviewed the results of the 2025 Stock Assessment Update and TC projections

Advisory Panel Discussion: Stock Assessment

- Need changes and additions to fishery-independent surveys used in assessments
- 2023-2025 wave data reflective of shifts in effort due to bluefin tuna

Advisory Panel Discussion: Draft Addendum I

- Both AP members advocated for maintaining the status quo in NJ-NYB and DMV regions and believe the current sizes allow ample opportunity for fish to reproduce multiple times before harvest.
- One AP member from Delaware believes a 4% or 8 cut would be manageable but does not support increasing the minimum size. Options for reductions or closures should allow fishery to choose between any wave.
- One AP member from New York noted that the size limit already leads to an increase in post-release mortality and that changes in NJ-NYB could push effort to LIS.

Amendment 1 Guidance

- Alternative management measures must be implemented in the second year after receiving overfishing status
- Each region and/or state must identify specific measures (e.g., possession limit, minimum size and seasonal closures, quota, etc.) to achieve necessary harvest reductions (if applicable) in the management document.
- Management measures will be developed based on at least a 50% probability of achieving F Target.



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Questions?