

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

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

**October 27, 2025**

**Approved May 4, 2026**

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1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of May 7, 2025** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to initiate an addendum to respond to the 2025 Stock Assessment Update for two stock regions: NJ/NY Bight and DMV. Additionally, the addendum should also allow for the MARI and LIS regions to modify management for precautionary or alignment purposes** (Page 13). Motion by Jason McNamee; second by Joe Cimino. Motion passes (Page 16).
4. **Move to elect Rich Wong as Vice-Chair of the Tautog Management Board** (Page 20). Motion by Robert LaFrance; second by Dr. Jason McNamee. Motion passes (Page 20).
5. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 20).

**ATTENDANCE**

**Board Members**

Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA, proxy for Rep. Armini (LA)	Jeff Kaelin, NJ (GA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Rich Wong, DE, proxy for J. Clark (AA)
Matthew Gates, CT (AA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
William Hyatt, CT (GA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for L. Fegley (AA)
Robert LaFrance, CT, proxy for Rep. Gresko (LA)	Russel Dize, MD (GA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)	Joe Grist, VA, proxy for J. Green (AA)
Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, NY, proxy for E. Hasbrouck (GA)	

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

**Ex-Officio Members**

Brian Scott, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.

**Staff**

Bob Beal	Caitlin Starks	Emilie Franke
Toni Kerns	Tracey Bauer	Katie Drew
Tina Berger	James Boyle	Jeff Kipp
Madeline Musante	Chelsea Tuohy	Samara Nehemiah

The Tautog Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Ballroom East/West via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Monday, October 27, 2025, and was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Matthew Gates.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIR MATTHEW GATES: Good afternoon, everybody. We're going to get started with the Tautog Board. My name is Matt Gates; I'm the Administrative Proxy for Connecticut. I am joined up here by Commission staff, James Boyle, Tautog Plan Coordinator and Katie Drew, Stock Assessment Scientist.

We have a few things to do today. We'll have a presentation and discussion on the recent stock assessment update. There may be some possible action on that. After that we'll consider the 2024 FMP Review and Compliance. We'll follow that with a selection of a Vice-Chair. Before we get started though, I would like to turn it over to Mr. Beal for a little housekeeping.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just really quick, want to note that there is one board member that is participating virtually, it is Scott Curatolo-Wagemann from New York. There is only that one person virtual.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

CHAIR GATES: All right, thank you. The first item up on our agenda is the approval of the agenda. Does anyone have any proposed changes to the agenda? I don't see any, so with that I think we can say the agenda is approved.

### **APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

CHAIR GATES: The next thing is we have the proceedings from the Spring, 2025 meeting. Has anybody had a chance to look that over or have any modifications to that? Okay, so likely we can have that called approved.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

CHAIR GATES: Public comment. At the beginning of each board meeting we provide the opportunity for the public to make comments on items not on the agenda. If there is anybody here who would like to make comment on something not on the agenda, now is your opportunity. Either raise your hand or raise your hand online. All right, I don't see any public comment.

CHAIR GATES: So, we can now move on to our Stock Assessment Update Presentation from Dr. Drew.

### **CONSIDER 2025 TAUTOG STOCK ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

DR. KATIE DREW: Thank you, Mr. Chair, our Technical Committee Chair has field work obligations this week, so she was not able to join us. I'll be presenting this in her stead, and of course just want to start out acknowledging the Tautog Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee, who are listed here, who did all of the work on this assessment. This is a really labor-intensive assessment, and I think we've had a good SAS, including a lot of new people, new to the Commission and new to the assessment process who contributed, so thanks to all of them. I'm just going to start with a quick overview of what we covered with this assessment update. We added four years of data to the last assessment, which was completed in 2021, so we added data through 2024 to the last assessment update. As a reminder, we do this assessment as four separate regional assessments.

The regions are sort of color coded up there on the screen. We have the MARI Region, which is Massachusetts and Rhode Island. We have the Long Island Sound Region, which is Connecticut and sort of the north side of Long Island for New York. We have the New Jersey-New York Bight, which is the south side of Long Island and New Jersey waters, and then we have some DMV, which is the waters of Delaware of Maryland and Virginia.

I'm going to go through the TORs that are structured through the assessment update report, so covering our fishery dependent and independent data, life history information and model structure, the population estimates and the model results, as well as our stock status projections and research recommendations.

The assessment report that you all received is structured regionally, so we cover each term of reference for each region as part of one document. But I am just going to be covering all of them for all regions altogether as we go through. TOR 1 covers our fishery dependent data. For total removals we are looking at recreational harvest, recreational release mortality, which we use a rate of 2.5% release mortality for that and commercial harvest.

Commercial discards are generally assumed to be negligible, and are not included in the assessment. We also have an MRIP CPUE, which uses a species guild approach. Basically, a trip is a tautog trip if it caught tautog or if it caught a species that is associated with tautog. We use the same guilds as in the benchmark for the MRIP update. Here is just a graph of our total removals.

The most recent four years of data that we added are in that lighter blue color, compared to the time series of landings. These are all on the same access, so you can see kind of the relative scale of landings from one region to the next.

You can also see that basically for Long Island region landings have remained relatively constant compared to where they were in the 2021 update, whereas they've increased in the MARI, New Jersey/New York Bight and DelMarVa region compared to the few years before that.

These landings are predominantly recreational. As we all know, even in regions that have a more significant part of rec/commercial harvest, it's still close to a 90% recreational kill

of total removals for this fishery. This is the MRIP CPUE by region. You can see all regions are showing an increasing trend since basically the last assessment update.

The degree to which that increase is really variable by region. You can see the increase is a little gentler in the MARI region in the top left there, compared to the DelMarVa and the New Jersey/New York Bight region. The New Jersey/New York Bight and the DelMarVa regions both saw a strong increase in the most recent two years that seems to be driven by the number of wide releases in the MRIP data. Because we use such a low release mortality for this species, total removals from the recreational fishery have not really changed, but the recreational CPUE is showing a strong increase in some of these regions. Moving ahead to the fishery independent data. For three of the regions, we have two to three independent indices, but for DelMarVa there are no fishery independent indices that do a good job of catching tautog, so that MRIP Index is the only index for the DelMarVa region.

The other regions include at least one index of adult abundance and one index of recruitment as a either Age 1 or young-of-year index. If we look at the trends of those by region. I'm just going to go through by region. I have included the MRIP CPUE on these figures, just so you can see sort of the trends in all of the indices together, but the MRIP CPUE is in that kind of reddish lighter color compared to the black line for the fishery independent indices.

This is the MARI region, and you can see we have sort of in these adult indices, which would be the Massachusetts trawl, the Rhode Island Fall trawl and the MRIP CPUE. We see a very similar trend of peaks at the beginning of the time series, and then kind of declines to a lower level, and maybe a little bit of an uptick at the end of the time series.

The Rhode Island seine has been showing several years of strong recruitment, after a period of lower recruitment in the 2010s-ish. This is the Long Island Sound region indices, so you can see again some

similar trends from the Connecticut Long Island Trawl Survey, and the MRIP CPUE, which are our adult indices, or Age 1 plus indices of abundance of a peak at the beginning of the time series and it declined, and then some upticks at the end of that time series.

The two recruitment indices, the Peconic Bay Trawl and the New York seine, are also showing increases in the most recent few years of that time series, which may be contributing to that increase in the older ages as well. This is the indices from the New Jersey/New York Bight region. We have the MRIP CPUE, and the New Jersey Ocean Trawl as our fishery independent indices of Age 1 plus abundance.

You can see there seems to be a conflict or tension in those two indices, where they both start out higher, but the New Jersey Trawl is predicting a bump in the middle of the time series that we don't see in the MRIP CPUE, and it's also predicting more of a decline in the most recent few years compared to the strong increase in the MRIP CPUE. We're seeing also some jumps in the young-of-year index that the New York seine in the most recent few years.

Again, that could be contributing to higher increases in the B2s of those releases of undersized fish, but it's hard to say exactly. Obviously the DelMarVa region does not have any indices, so we'll jump straight to model structure. We are updating the ASAP model approved during the last benchmark assessment. We're using the same model structure and life history information for all regions.

Really all we are doing is adding a few more years of data after the assessment update. I'm going to talk now about the model results, and I'm going to focus mainly on probably one of the main findings here, which is that all models showed a significant retrospective pattern, which seems to have worsened since the last assessment update. We did apply ASMFCs Guidance Document on whether or not you

apply a retrospective adjustment. This Guidance Document had a number of basically a flow chart that you walk through to look at a few different metrics, to determine if the retrospective pattern that we're seeing is significant enough to warrant an adjustment. We are looking at a series of things, including Number 1 is Mohn's rho outside of the recommended bounds. Number 2 is the adjusted estimate outside the 90% confidence intervals of the unadjusted estimate.

If you're familiar with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center Assessment, this is basically our, is your little red dot outside that box or not? Then we look at things like, is the terminal year of each peel outside the confidence intervals of the base run, and did the terminal year of the last assessment update outside the confidence interval of the current base run.

I'll show you these results and we can walk through and see what they look like. The recommended acceptable bounds for a long-lived species are basically negative 0.15 next to positive 2. For all regions rho was outside the bounds for both F and SSB for all regions except New Jersey/New York Bight, where the estimate of rho for the three-year average F was 0.18, so it was within those bounds.

There were differences in sort of the direction of the pattern, so in MARI, Long Island Sound and New Jersey/New York Bight, the retrospective pattern was in sort of a positive direction where you would overestimate fishing mortality and underestimate SSB. Whereas, for the DelMarVa region it was reversed and we're in a less conservative, more risky scenario, where we are underestimating F and overestimating SSB.

This is the plot of those. The red dot is the retrospectively adjusted value of spawning stock biomass on the X axis, and fishing mortality on the Y axis. When that red dot is outside of that box it means that when you apply the adjustment you are outside the confidence intervals of your unadjusted value.

Part of the reason we look at this is trying to evaluate whether the uncertainty that we are capturing with the model itself, in terms of those confidence intervals, is that capturing some of the uncertainty from the retrospective pattern itself? For all regions except New Jersey/New York Bight, you can see that that red dot is outside of the box for the unadjusted value, meaning that the uncertainty from the retrospective pattern is greater than the uncertainty that is captured in the confidence intervals from this approach.

Basically, in the Northeast Fisheries Science Center metric, this is what they look at to determine whether you would apply a retrospective adjustment, and so for three of these regions we would, for New Jersey/New York Bight we would not. But the ASMFC document includes some guidance from ISIS, looking at a few other things as well, including kind of whether the terminal year of your most recent assessment update was outside the bounds of the current base run.

The point of this is to say basically, looking back where were we at the end of the last assessment, which is that 2020 value. Were we, like now that we've run that update, now that we've added more years of data, do we think we're still in the same place? You can see for again, this is the three-year average F with the confidence intervals. The orangish line is the 2021 update and the black line with the gray confidence intervals is the current assessment update.

You can see all regions except New Jersey/New York Bight for a fishing mortality, that terminal year estimate from the previous assessment is outside the confidence bounds of the current assessment. You can see for MARI and Long Island Sound that estimate of F was higher in 2020, for the 2021 update than it is for the 2025 update. Whereas for the DMV the opposite is true, that we were estimating a lower fishing mortality in the 2021 update than we are currently.

That pattern is reversed for spawning stock biomass, where for the MARI, Long Island Sound and New Jersey/New York Bight Region the terminal year estimate from the previous assessment update is outside the confidence intervals of the current base run, and it was lower in the 2021 update than it is in the current 2025 update.

Basically, we think there are more tautog out there now, or we think now in 2020 there were more tautog, or there was more SSB than we thought at the time for the MARI, Long Island Sound, and New Jersey/New York Bight regions. But for the DelMarVa region the estimate of SSB in 2021 was much higher than it is in or current assessment update.

Based on all of these factors, all the regions exhibited a significant retrospective pattern for SSB and all regions except the New Jersey/New York Bight region exhibited a significant retrospective pattern for F. Therefore, a retrospective adjustment was applied to evaluate stock status and to conduct the projections.

Stock status, reference point definitions are on this slide here for MARI, New Jersey/New York Bight and the DMV region. Our target is the F40% SPR and our threshold is the F30%SPR. For SSB the target then is the equilibrium SSB when you fish at that F target, and the threshold is the equilibrium SSB when you fish at that F threshold.

The Long Island Sound Region uses slightly different reference points, we use FMSY reference points for this region. FMSY is our target and SSB MSY is our target SSB. Then 75% of SSB MSY is our threshold for SSB and our threshold for fishing mortality is the F rate that will get you to 75% of SSB MSY.

An additional note, something we do a little different for tautog than we do for some of our other species is, we use a three-year running average of F to compare to this reference point. For example, in 2024 the value of F is going to be the average F of 2022, 2023 and 2024. Those are the reference points we're using; this is our F status slot.

You can see the fishing mortality rate is that solid black line with the confidence intervals plotted with the F threshold, which is the solid red line, and the F target which is the dashed black line. You can see that for MARI and Long Island Sound we are below that overfishing threshold, meaning overfishing is not occurring.

For New Jersey/New York Bight we are above the fishing mortality threshold, and even though we apply that retrospective adjustment, which is that black dot, it brings that terminal year estimate down, but it does not change stock status. For the DMV it does change stock status.

The DelMarVa region the estimate from the model is below that threshold, but when we apply the retrospective adjustment, it brings us back above the fishing mortality threshold. This is spawning stock biomass. Again, we have our threshold in red and our target in that dashed black line, and the dot is the adjusted value. That is the value that we're using to determine stock status. For MARI and Long Island Sound we are above the threshold and back above the target for both regions, and when we adjust it just moves you farther above that target and threshold. It does not change stock status.

For New Jersey/New York Bight, we are extremely close to that threshold. But when we adjust for the retrospective pattern, we are above it and close to that target. For the DMV again, this does change stock status. You can see that real sharp increase in SSB at the end of the time series, and when you apply the retrospective adjustment, it brings it down below the threshold, meaning the DMV is overfished.

I think one of the things we pointed out in the report is the DMV region is again, the only region without a fishery independent index, it only has that MRIP index. I think part of what the model is a little bit struggling with here at the end is that we don't have good information on recruitment yet.

The fishery is not really targeting those young small fish, so we only have a few years of data above the youngest fish and the model is therefore creating a lot of recruitment at the end of the time series. We did look at a current fishery independent index for tautog that is not in the assessment because it was too short. It did not exist at the time of the benchmark.

It is getting a little longer now. It does show a little bit of a positive pattern in recruitment of an increase at the end of the time series. I think it's unclear exactly how much of this increase we're seeing at the end may be real, or how much of this is just an artifact of the model? Again, with looking at the previous assessment update, we also saw a very similar pattern of a real strong increase at the end of the time series that was not borne out by the most recent assessment update, hence that retrospective pattern.

If we look at the stock status in table form, we can see MARI not overfishing and not overfished, which is the same status as it was in 2021. For the Long Island Sound region not overfishing and not overfished, which again is the same status from 2021. The New Jersey/New York Bight region is experiencing overfishing but it is not overfished.

This is a change from the 2021 assessment. In the 2021 update New Jersey/New York Bight was overfished but it was not experiencing overfishing. You can see sort of that upward trend at the end of the 2021 assessment continued for SSB and the stock popped over that SSB threshold, so it is no longer overfished but sort of over that same time period removals started to increase as well, fishing mortality increased and we are currently above that fishing mortality threshold for the New Jersey/New York Bight region.

For the DMV overfishing is occurring and the stock is overfished. This is also a change from 2021, where the stock was not experiencing overfishing and the stock was not overfished. This is likely due to the fact that we did not correct for the retrospective pattern at the end of the time series last assessment. Again, you saw that spike in SSB.

At the end of the time series F came down. The metrics of F status were accessible for 2021 update but this year going forward they are overfishing and overfished status, in part because of that retrospective adjustment. We did a series of just one short term projection, where we projected the population forward for three years using the most recent three-year average of removals. We did apply a retrospective adjustment across all regions for the initial numbers at age. Basically, taking the Mohn's rho for age-specific abundance at age and using that to kind of scale the population back to what we think is probably a more accurate rate, an adjusted value to start the projections with.

Looking at again the average of the most three years of landings. If we maintain that going forward at constant landings approach. For all regions we're looking at the probability of being at or above the F threshold in three years. That is the probability of experiencing overfishing in three years, and then on the right column is the probability of being at or below the SSB threshold in three years. That is the probability of being overfished.

For MARI our probabilities of overfishing are fairly low at 26% and fairly low for Long Island Sound and the DMV at 0% and 22%, but still high for the New Jersey/New York Bight region. Meanwhile, the probability of being at or below the SSB threshold in three years is fairly high for the DMV region, but fairly low for the other three regions.

Essentially, our probability of changing stock status in three years, if we keep sort of current constant removals. There is a very low probability that the New Jersey/New York Bight will not be overfishing, but that it seems to, if we can maintain the slightly lower levels of removals we've seen in recent years for the DMV that will bring the F down at least below the threshold, but will not really rebuild the stock in that time period for the DMV region.

Finally, just to cover a research recommendation.

The most important one being the TC and the SAS recommend conducting a benchmark stock assessment with a peer review scheduled for 2029 and starting work in 2027. This will allow the TC and the SAS to hopefully investigate and resolve these retrospective issues, as well as to incorporate several of the new fishery independent surveys that are out there, including some pot and trap surveys and a young of year index for the DelMarVa region that would increase our understanding of tautog for these regions from a more fishery independent standpoint.

That covers the assessment update and I'm happy to take questions on that. I believe James will have a couple of slides on management response, so we can cover assessment questions now and then segue into that discussion later.

CHAIR GATES: I see Joe Cimino.

MR. JOE CIMINO: I apologize for not knowing this, but just 2029 seems far away. We'll talk to James about what we need to do in the meantime. Just because this is kind of outside the SEDAR process, can you just remind us what a benchmark peer review would be? Is it an ASMFC kind of?

DR. DREW: Yes, that would be an external ASMFC review that we would organize.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Jason McNamee next.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Thank you, Dr. Drew. Great presentation as always, pulling a lot of information into a nice concise package. Nice job. One thing I was wondering about is, and you mentioned this, the averaging of the F. Originally, we did that because there were these super spiky big swings in F, you know from assessment to assessment.

I'm just wondering if you think things have dampened down a little bit? Are we getting a more consistent signal? You know the kind of base question is, do we continue to need to do this

averaging of the F to kind of camp down some of that variability we get in the terminal year.

DR. DREW: It's a good question and I think if we do still see spikiness in the non-three-year average. If you compare the three-year average to the annual estimates that three-year average is smoothing things out. We are still seeing some spikes in F. I think one of the things, at least the region that I was looking at, the retrospective pattern was less for the three-year average than it was for the non-three-year average F over that time period.

I think there is still some benefit of continuing that smoothing approach. I would have to go back and doublecheck and see if that actually affected stock status at all for any of these. But we do still see sort of peaks and valleys in some of the MRIP numbers as well, especially at the regional level, where I think our PSEs are, are not as good as at the coast level. I think there is still some benefit to that going forward.

CHAIR GATES: Bill Hyatt.

MR. WILLIAM HYATT: I apologize if I missed something, but I was just wondering if you could speculate a little bit about what might be behind causing the retrospective pattern. You know is it an artifact of the models? Is it a deficiency in some of the data that is being collected? I know it's one of the research questions, but just what does your gut tell you might be behind it?

DR. DREW: I don't know. We did not really dig into that to see. I mean obviously, I think one of the issues is probably parsing out some of that catch. Trying to separate some of these regions when we have neighboring states that are basically doing the test partitioning based on where these landings, at least on the recreational side, where these landings are being intercepted and not necessarily where they are being caught.

We're doing it on the basis of like, you know the DelMarVa region is Delaware, Maryland and Virginia landings versus where are people actually fishing. I think that is probably more of an issue in the New Jersey/New York Bight, Long Island Sound, MARI region, where we're probably not parsing landings out correctly.

The perception of what those landings are may be influencing the perception of some of the trends. There is also the possibility we are using an age constant estimate of natural mortality for this stock. If we switch to an age varying would that change our perception of stock status. I think there is a couple of different things here, as well as trying the potential for movement across stocks. Stock boundaries are somewhat arbitrary. We don't have the genetic data to say this is exactly the right boundary and they are not moving.

There may also be some migration that we're not fully capturing with our current like very single region approach. They have a lot of options, and hopefully that is something we can address. I think WAM is certainly on the table and that has definitely that sort of random effect to state-space framework has done great things at the Northeast Center for resolving the retrospective pattern. I think that is definitely something we will look into for the benchmark.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Jesse Hornstein next.

MR. JESSE HORNSTEIN: Katie, I just had a question about the PSEs for New York. Do know what they are when the cast netters split up into the Sound and the Bight region?

DR. DREW: I do not. Well, I do not, we did not do an MRIP data request, and that's really the only way that we can get, because of the way we do the partitioning. We can run the PSEs through the R code that we use to do the landings, but we know those PSEs are not exactly accurate. I might be able to do for Long Island Sound only, from a different approach and get back to you. But I don't know what the exact PSEs are on that. But definitely worse than at the state level.

CHAIR GATES: All right, switch to the other side of the table with Mike Luisi next.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: Katie, I wonder if you could speak to in the DelMarVa region the lack of fishery independent data. Without any it turns into just a harvest index, right, Commercial Catch Harvest Index. I just have concerns that getting to the retrospective bias it's like the table flopped. It flipped over and in our region the retrospectives are all opposite of where the retrospectives are in the regions with the fishery independent data.

I'm wondering, just from experience. I believe that in the next year or two maybe, I'm looking over to Rich, that some of the work that we've been doing in Delaware and Maryland is going to be folded in and incorporated. Do you anticipate that that could alternately flip the retrospective back over? I don't have enough experience in that to know how one thing will affect the other. Just any perspective you could provide would be great.

DR. DREW: Sure, absolutely we will be including kind of new surveys in Delaware and Maryland that are fishery independent and that will hopefully will do a better job of catching tautog than the existing fishery independent surveys, which are not really dedicated to tautog or for the right habitat for them.

Hopefully that will bring some better information for tautog. I think it is possible that part of what is driving the retrospective pattern in the DelMarVa region is the lack of information on those younger age classes at the end of the time series. The model doesn't have enough information on Age 1 or 2, and is like, while I can just create a bunch of them.

At the end of the time series and you know landings are coming down. I'm creating a bunch of recruitment, SSB is going to go up, and then you add a few more years of data, and you start to see that those year classes don't show up in the rest of the catch at age, and so the

model is like whoops, and brings that SSB down. We saw it definitely at the end of the '21 update, where you can see SSB fights at the end, and then when you add more years of data it doesn't show that, just stays flat and low. Now we're doing the same thing at the end of this run. I think having more information on those younger year classes from the Maryland Seagrass Survey, which is a recruitment survey, and then having more information on fishery independent age structure from the Delaware Trap Survey I think would definitely improve the retrospective pattern.

You know whether it would result in stock status I can't say. But I think having more information on those younger age classes that are not well sampled and not well captured by the fishery would be important. Obviously, for the MRIP CPUE we are using total catch not harvest, and we're bringing in the age structure of the B2s to help inform the age structure of that index.

But that is also an area where we do not have a lot of good data, which is the length frequency of those discards. In those regions where we've seen a spike in that CPUE associated with a spike in the B2s, like in DelMarVa. I think having more information outside of that sort of limited sample size would really benefit the model.

CHAIR GATES: Mike, follow up?

MR. LUISI: Just a quick follow up, Mr. Chairman. With more information it is likely the assessment will be more accurate. That is what we're hoping to turn it around. I guess the assessment right now is probably it's not as strong as it can be. I do have concerns in using this information to drive management, with what I know to be new information very soon, that will hopefully get folded in to the next assessment. I'm sorry, that wasn't a question, I don't think, Mr. Chairman, but just wanted to drop that on the table.

CHAIR GATES: Thanks, I'll keep that in mind next time you raise your hand. I saw Rich Wong next.

MR. RICHARD WONG: Yes, I was just going to make some comments, go circling back to Bill's question about the retrospective patterns that we're seeing. Most of these assessments are largely dependent on fishery dependent indices. Mike, you mentioned some of the DMV assessment only has one index and its only fishery dependent.

When used as fishery dependent indices, you know efficiency selectivity changes over time, quite often in fisheries, fisheries dependent indices. I have some serious concerns. I echo Mr. Luisis's comments. I have very serious concerns about using the DMV assessment to determine stock status here, because one, fishery dependent index, basing an entire assessment off of one fishery dependent index kind of raises my eyebrows.

Then trying to adjust it using a retrospective adjustment is just a superficial improvement on something that could be fundamentally flawed to begin with. I just would, again it's not a question, I guess, it's more of a comment. I have some serious concerns and deep reservations about using the stock assessment in DMV region for management. It's probably, in my opinion, it's much safer to stay status quo until we bring in two really important fishery independent indices in a few years. One is the Delaware Trap Survey, a very comprehensive and robust survey. We've got catches, almost all of the age classes in the region, and the Maryland Young of the Year Index Survey.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Dan McKiernan next and then I'll go to you, Jason, after that.

MR. DANIEL MCKIERNAN: Katie, this morning in the ACCSP discussion there was talk about a new question that Massachusetts had been asking ACCSP to adopt. We just ask the anglers to identify some location for fishing. I hadn't thought about it until today, but that would probably have a huge benefit, would it not to this assessment?

DR. DREW: Yes, as a member of ACCSPs recreational Technical Committee, I am familiar with what Massachusetts has proposed and I have supported that from a stock assessment perspective. I think Tautog is exactly one of the species that would benefit from, to a certain extent, about where did you spend most of your time fishing.

For some of these states I think that is something that could help us partition out some of these nearby regions to say, because if you say inland for Connecticut versus New York versus New Jersey, versus Massachusetts, there is a lot of overlap versus pointing on a map. Yes, I think that hopefully would help us partition out these catches better, or at least understand back in time potential biases in using its state of intercept, state of landing as a proxy.

CHAIR GATES: Jason McNamee.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: This is a question. I'm going to lead into it though. These fishery dependent indices that we're talking about. While that is true, they are fisheries dependent. They are configured in a way to incorporate through the guild zeroes. We are turning this fisheries-dependent information as best we can into an index that we feel is somewhat reliable for understanding the state of the population. An additional aspect of that is, this approach is used not just in tautog, but in a number of other species as well. I have all of that correct, right?

DR. DREW: Yes, that is correct. You know obviously, this assessment did pass peer review using the fishery dependent CPUE for the DMV region. But for sure it would be, I think the quality of the assessment would be improved when we're able to incorporate some of these fishery independent data during the next benchmark.

CHAIR GATES: I don't see any more questions. James has a couple of slides for us on the management stuff, and then we'll get into a discussion on that.

MR. JAMES BOYLE IV: Yes, just really quickly a couple slides on what the guidance from Amendment I is inspiring for the assessment. Amendment I states that if the regional fishing mortality rate exceeds the threshold, then the Board must initiate a management document within one year and implement the measures within two years.

The Board may set a specific risk level for analysis to develop those measures, but it must be developed to at least a 50% probability of achieving the F target. Initially if the Board is to initiate harvest reduction, then they will provide a timeframe to achieve the G target to the Technical Committee, which will be used to develop short-term projections to determine the necessary harvest levels to achieve the target within that timeframe. Regard spawning stock biomass, the Board may also initiate and addendum to increase spawning stock biomass through a rebuilding plan, but is not required through the FMP. I can take further questions.

CHAIR GATES: Anybody got any questions? I'll head online. I don't see any questions.

**CONSIDER ACCEPTANCE OF STOCK ASSESSMENT UPDATE FOR MANAGEMENT USE**

CHAIR GATES: So if anyone has any thoughts on ways to proceed from here, now would be the time. Jason McNamee.

DR. McNAMEE: Yes, I'll start with a motion if that's appropriate, and kind of like the highest-level motion at this point, James. This is a little different than what we talked about. Just because of the discussion here it is fairly simple though. I'll move to approve the use of the 2025 Tautog Stock Assessment Update for management use.

CHAIR GATES: Thank you, is there a second to that? I see Joe Cimino. Any discussion? Do you have anything to add to that, Jason?

DR. McNAMEE: Yes, I mean I think a couple of quick notes. You know I don't disagree with some of the concerns folks have voiced about the assessment. I have a number of them myself, and I'll kind of come back to that once we kind of get past these first couple of wickets here. But I think there has been some research recently that suggested that analytical approach with a retrospective adjustment is preferable for management use, then defaulting to like a data limited approach or something like that.

I can't remember which research track that came out of, but Crystal Gault was one of the researchers on that work. I'll just sort of note that yes, there are concerns with this assessment, but it passed peer review. I think we would be well served to continue to use them for setting management advice. Yes, I'll kind of leave it there for now.

CHAIR GATES: Joe, did you have anything to add to that, since you seconded?

MR. CIMINO: Yes, I do. Jay and I have been working on this species for over 20 years. It was the first Stock Assessment Subcommittee that I was a part of. It's one of the few Mid-Atlantic reach species that we deal with. We are fortunate that we don't have all of those challenges. You know we're not necessarily as a Commission, the same for the Mid-Atlantic Council, dealing with so many data poor species, where they just don't lend themselves to fisheries independent data.

Unfortunately, this is one of those species. I think we do need to go further than this. But I appreciate everything that is happening so far for the assessment. Like constantly staying on top of the gills and looking at the benchmark is important. I support this motion. I do think we need to go forward and start an addendum to talk about management actions. I think in New Jersey we're seeing a lot of fish, which is great. But it's that spike in fishing mortality that Katie talked about is a reality. There is a next step, but I'm fully supportive of this motion.

CHAIR GATES: Any other discussion on the motion? Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: I wonder if by approving this and getting back to what James just presented, as far as a timeline for management action. Can we just pause for a second and talk through what a timeline would look like if this went into management use, given that the DelMarVa area is overfished and overfishing.

If we're accepting that, accepting those terms, even with the concerns that we have about the analysis just being one dependent index, basically. What kind of timeline does that put us on for having to make adjustments? I have another layer of concern that that adjustment will come right at the foot of the next benchmark. I just would like to understand the timeline.

If an addendum were initiated based on this, which sounds to me like we have to do something to address the overfished/overfishing statuses. Where does that put us for taking action? Is it 2028, is it 2027, 2026 we wouldn't be able to do anything in time for 2026. Just help us understand over in the DelMarVa region what we're looking at.

CHAIR GATES: James, do you have anything to that?

MR. BOYLE: Yes, so the timeline, just to recap, is the addendum must be initiated within one year for the implementation within two. An addendum wouldn't have to be initiated at this meeting. Then the second part of that was the TC tasking of the projections.

Those could be, they can be done in conjunction, so you can initiate an addendum, have a PDT and have the TC tasking kind of working together to develop those measures alongside, or you could run the projections with the TC and then initiate the addendum afterward, having already seen what those projections provide.

There are only two pieces that we need, the TC needs from the Board is 1, what is the timeframe to achieve the target for these projections, and then Number 2, Amendment I mandates that the probability of achieving a target in that timeframe is at least 50%. But the Board could codify a percentage higher than that.

CHAIR GATES: Jesse.

MR. HORNSTEIN: We also have the FES calibration coming up. I was just wondering how that will impact tautog, if you have any idea. I mean that is supposed to come out next year, if I'm correct. If we're taking management action that could change our perspective on tautog in general, if it does impact how the assessment performs. I just wanted to see if there are any futuristic predictions that you have, Katie.

DR. DREW: I don't think we know what the impact of the FES calibration is going to be on tautog. Obviously, this is a fishery with a pretty strong component in those lower effort waves, which the FES was finding that were more likely to be overestimated, so there may be more of an impact for tautog than for some other species.

But I think it is really uncertain, and we won't know until those numbers actually come out. Ideally yes, they will be released next year as part of like the final estimates for 2025 and back will all be the calibrated estimates. Whether that timeframe remains realistic, I think is extremely hard to tell at this point, given current conditions. What is the impact of that on tautog? That likely will have an impact on the tautog assessment, because they are a predominantly recreational species.

I don't think we'll know what the effect would be, or we couldn't predict what the effect would be until we see the actual impact on the removal's numbers. We do not intend to do an assessment update with those new numbers. Those would be folded into the next benchmark. I think if we took management action, we would be taking it sort of on the basis of the current assessment, and then we would be looking to predict a percent reduction.

We would want to say we want an F percent reduction from 2020, from let's say the last three-year average of whatever those removals were. We could do that reduction calculation on the basis of the new MRIP numbers. New MRIP in '20 for the most recent three years, and what would we predict the reduction would be through a change in bag limit or size limit, et cetera.

But we would not sort of run that back through the projections to say, oh actually, stock status is this and we need a different percent reduction. We could incorporate some of that new data into the reduction calculations, if that is what the Board would like. But obviously that would delay sort of the implementation and the calculation of those reductions until the new MRIP data were available, if that is helpful.

CHAIR GATES: Any other comments? Rob LaFrance.

MR. ROB LaFRANCE: When the recalibration takes place, do you anticipate that to be about a year out? How long would it take to do what you just described? Is that another year beyond that in order to use those numbers?

DR. DREW: I think at this point we're anticipating maybe more like 6 to 9 months out. Depending on again, like capacity and when things are open again, so 6 to 9 months to get the new MRIP numbers. Then I think we could do those calculations within one meeting cycle of when those are released, or within a month or two of when those numbers are released. I think probably this time next year we could have those calculations for the Board to look at, assuming the recalibrated numbers, the delay is not excessive.

CHAIR GATES: Jason McNamee. Hold on, Jason. Toni gets to go first, sorry.

MS. TONI KERNS: There could be consequences of asking for that update though to occur. You

might sacrifice a different stock assessment for this stock assessment. You can't request.

DR. DREW: To be clear, we would not be doing an assessment update. This would just be using the FES numbers for the size and bag limit analyses. To be clear, there is no new assessment update and if you do want a new assessment update, we will have to talk about what we would move or bump, because we are pretty booked for the next few years.

CHAIR GATES: Thanks for your patience, Jason, go ahead.

DR. McNAMEE: No, that was good clarification, thanks for that. I think my thoughts still hold. I think we're talking about a lot of uncertainty here. The recalibration is another one. Trying to gain that out, I think, is tricky. It could be like far worse. I think this is a species, the arc of getting information to manage the species is really, really long.

We're all, even in the two regions that seem to be in decent shape, we're dancing around the reference points there as well. We've been sort of rescued by retrospective adjustments and things like that. This is a long-lived slow growing species. We knock this one down it takes a really long time to get it back up. I just wanted to offer those thoughts before we take the vote here.

CHAIR GATES: Adam Nowalsky.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: Voting in the affirmative for this motion would trigger the provisions of the FMP, forcing this Board to take management action as was described earlier. Is that correct?

CHAIR GATES: It depends.

MS. KERNS: This Board has actually already approved the stock assessment for management use, because we typically only do this motion when we have a peer review, and we already did the peer review and the benchmark peer review. That is when we usually approve for management use.

When we do updates, we typically don't have this motion, because you've already approved it for management use and we're just updating the data and you have a new set of information, and you respond as necessary. We're a little bit outside of our normal with this. I would say you have already triggered that action needing to occur, because this assessment was approved in 2016 for management use.

CHAIR GATES: Follow up, Adam.

MR. NOWALSKY: Hearing that, I would have to turn back to the maker and seconder of the motion. What are we hoping to gain by having this motion before us and taking action on the motion at all?

CHAIR GATES: Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: I'll apologize. It was listed on the agenda as something that maybe needed to happen, and so that is why I thought I would take that step. I am happy to, I mean I think it's the Board's motion now, so I don't know what the recourse is here. I have a follow up motion that is more granular. I don't know what the right, I'm out of my league here as far as the parliamentary procedure. I thought I was supposed to do this one first, so that is why I did it.

CHAIR GATES: We're going to try to have Bob Beal help us out here.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, if there is a desire to withdraw this motion. If the Chair asks the Board, is there any objection to withdrawing this motion and there isn't any, then it can go away.

CHAIR GATES: I think one of the makers would need to, oh it's because it's the Board's motion.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BEAL: Yes, the Board owns it now, so anyone around the table could suggest that and the Chair can simply ask, I

think. We don't have to be super formal about it.

CHAIR GATES: Jason, go ahead.

DR. McNAMEE: I have to make a motion to withdraw? I suggest we withdraw this motion, since it's already approved for management use and then take the next step.

CHAIR GATES: Is there any objection from the rest of the Board to taking that action? This motion has now been withdrawn. Jason, you indicated you have another motion ready to go.

DR. McNAMEE: Actually, I will send, because I also modified the one, we talked about James sending that and Madeline, I have you on here too. It's the middle paragraph. Now I have to find it again. **I move to initiate an addendum to respond to the 2025 Stock Assessment Update for two of the stock regions: New Jersey/New York Bight and the DMV region. Additionally, the addendum should also allow for the MARI and LIS Regions to modify management for precautionary or alignment purposes.**

CHAIR GATES: Thank you, is there a second to this motion? I see Joe Cimino. Jason, would you like to add anything?

DR. McNAMEE: I think there is a definite need here to take action. As I mentioned, even in the regions where we haven't triggered stock status issues, I think a lot of that is due to the retrospective adjustment, which is the appropriate thing to do here, I'm not saying anything negative about that.

You know I think that is the appropriate, it met the guidance and so it was a good thing to do. But looking at the information the trends are bad, some of the retrospectives are pretty severe, and yes. That's why I added in both the MARI and the Long Island Sound Regions as well, because I think all of us ought to be thinking about precaution here with the tautog stock.

In addition to seeing some bad signals in the information that is informing the stock assessment,

the harvest and the recreational discard mortality, like all of these things are going up at the same time. I think while the assessment has its flaws, through no fault of the analysts, I think they did a great job and maybe come back to talking about the benchmark here in a couple of minutes.

I think it is important to move forward and make sure we're being protective of the stock before we knock it down too far and then spend another decade trying to rebuild it back up.

CHAIR GATES: I think we've had quite a bit of discussion on these points already, but I'll open it up for comments if anybody has anything else they would like to add. Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: You know we have the benefit, and I'm not going to call on him or call him out, but we have the benefit of having Brian Scott here as our representative for Law Enforcement in New Jersey, one of the regions that has seen an increase in fishing mortality. We also have a very high level of noncompliance that is an issue. The reason why I said we need to move beyond just so, I will say, to our first rescinded motion.

I think Adam doesn't appreciate the daily affirmations of just saying, this is what we do. As I said earlier, I appreciate the struggles of assessment knowledge for this species, but we are getting other information that says, at least in our region, you know we need to really think this through. I very much look forward to having an addendum to talk about what might need to happen in our region. I'm sully supportive of this.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Roy Miller.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: I would just like to acknowledge that my understanding of tautog is that they primarily move inshore and offshore, as opposed to north/south. I am just throwing that out there to remind everyone that it seems unlikely to me that what the DMV region does

with regard to tautog will have an adverse effect on the other, certainly the two more northern regions.

Having said that, I'm just kind of wondering in Jay's motion, if Jay would help me understand what respond means. Could respond be, put additional resources into a fishery independent survey or gather more fishery independent data from the surveys that are already ongoing, or are we talking about taking a management action, if we approve this motion with the term respond in it. If Jay and the Chair could help me, I would appreciate it.

CHAIR GATES: What I took it as is wanting to do some sort of management action, but I'll let Jason expand on that if he wants to.

DR. McNAMEE: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Roy and that was my intent. Management action to reduce, in particular in the regions where there have been identified stock status triggers to kind of take management action to correct those.

CHAIR GATES: I see Rich Wong.

MR. WONG: I also started 20 years ago with tautog with Jay and Joe, and we've fought hard to protect the stock. I totally agree with that and I think we've made progress, certainly since the late nineties or early 2000s. I can't support this, because these assessments are not, I think you would all agree they are not created equally.

The DMV assessment is essentially flawed. I know it passed peer review, a benchmark peer review way back in, I don't know was it 2016? In any case, I think it's more dangerous to make bad management decisions than to stay status quo for this region over this time. In my opinion we protected this stock pretty sufficiently, because that size limit is well above size at maturity. It's protecting quite a lot of mature females, and I do think when we look at the DMV assessment the confidence intervals are very large here in the DMV, those outputs. After you adjust for retrospective error, the retrospective adjustments aren't even in the confidence intervals. The Mohn's rho is outside of the acceptable range for that assessment.

Again, I think there is less harm in waiting to implement some good data, you know for this region. As Mike brought up, by the time we would take some management actions in this region it might be two years, and then we're going to do a benchmark assessment, and then find I guess that things are going to change quite a lot for this assessment.

Then we're going to have to maybe go back, you know yoyo or flip flop our regulations in the span of a couple of years. Joe is correct, and Jay are correct, it is a long-lived species, things move slowly kind of the dynamics kind of move slowly for this species. We already have a 16-inch size limit and closed seasons in this region. I think it is enough to hold us off until the benchmark assessment in 2029.

CHAIR GATES: I can see two more hands up, so we'll do those two and then we'll try to move this to a vote. Adam Nowalsky.

MR. NOWALSKY: Will there be any opportunity to see any of the information from the DMV fishery dependent work as part of this addendum? Can we include anything in there to see some of that? If so, what, and does that need to be explicitly detailed as part of this, because for me, I think that is one of the big decision points here that I have that would help inform the magnitude of what we might have to do, as well as if we have to do anything.

If we are on the cusp of having that information put into a benchmark stock assessment, I would want that information to be included in this addendum. That is my question, I'm seeing some nods. Again, what can we actually include just round the table. Would that be enough to make sure it gets in there or does this have to be modified to make sure some of that information is included for public consumption?

DR. DREW: I think the Technical Committee could certainly review the indices and then could then show the indices to the Board, and include them as part of the addendum, if that

was what the Board wanted to see. Obviously, the data themselves could not really be used in the projections or in any of the sort of calculations in response to the findings. But we could certainly present those indices as they exist right now.

CHAIR GATES: Rich, are you responding to that?

MR. WONG: That is a good question, Adam. We see stable to increasing counts of abundance in our trap survey in the ocean over the past eight years, and importantly in the later years of the time series. Thank you.

CHAIR GATES: All right, Joe.

MR. CIMINO: Just thinking about this, and as Rich pointed out, we've been doing this for a long time. I understand kind of the holes in what the DelMarVa has to deal with. I'm kind of wondering, can they move into what this motion, what Jay put it as, kind of precautionary.

Would the DelMarVa region be accepting the idea that they move into just that review of precautionary measures, because I do feel, and as I mentioned. I do think that in New Jersey we have a spike in fishing mortality. I want to see an addendum start. My question would be, can DelMarVa move into the precautionary and that is just how the addendum moves forward?

CHAIR GATES: Go ahead, James.

MR. BOYLE: Because they received the overfishing status, Amendment 1 is still pretty clear that the addendum needs to be initiated for corrective action. That does specify the measures for that region need to follow the projections outlined to the timeframe, and the 50% at least probability of achieving the F target, so they are bound in that way. I suppose in terms of the motion or how you consider those measures, that can be flexible, but the measures themselves would probably likely be the same.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Bill Hyatt's hand come up, and then I think we'll try to move this to a vote after that.

MR. HYATT: I'm a little muddy on the answer to the question that Adam asked earlier, and just for clarity. Can the data that is going to come forth, can that be used to maybe not reanalyze, but reinterpret some of the information that has been presented here, that can then affect management decisions that are brought forward? Are the timing and the process sufficient to allow that to happen?

DR. DREW: I think we could. Again, I think there is also the question of when does the Board want to task the TC to do these projections? Do you want to wait until the new FES data are available to include those as part of our calculations or not? Again, we would not be doing a full assessment update, we would just be using the FES numbers to calculate the reductions from. If you wanted to wait for that time period and receive those calculations this time next year.

I think that would also be enough time for the TC to look at these indices and discuss how that would affect, as you said, our interpretation of the results and what is driving that sort of soft data change for the DelMarVa region is that strong uptick at the end of the time series that we saw at the last assessment update that did not materialize in this update.

I think we could go back and say, are there other trends that would suggest that the strong uptick we're seeing at the end of the time series for this assessment is a real thing, or more real than it was during the last assessment. We could look at that, but I think it would be a very qualitative analysis for sure.

CHAIR GATES: I think we've had a pretty good discussion on this. Is there any need to, so I've heard some opposition, so I'm not going to try the easy way. Is there any need to caucus? We'll caucus for one minute on this. All right, if

we can have everybody come back. As soon as everybody gets to their seats, I will call the question. **All those in favor of the motion on the board, please raise your hand.**

**MS. KERNS: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, I think that's it.**

**CHAIR GATES: All right, now all those opposed.**

**MS. KERNS: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia.**

**CHAIR GATES: Any abstentions? Any null votes? I have that passing 5 to 3.**

#### **CONSIDER MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

CHAIR GATES: As a follow on, I think we need to do some tasking to the TC for the timeframe and for the percent of this level. If anybody would like to make a motion on that, that would be great. If we could just get that on the record from somebody that would be helpful, a little bit of discussion on this point. Roy Miller.

MR. MILLER: Question, Mr. Chair. If we're talking about timeframes here, is there a possibility of delaying this action for a year or so, so we can look at what fishery independent data are available, and see if it would change our recommendations?

CHAIR GATES: James.

MR. BOYLE: By Amendment 1 the Addendum did not need to be initiated until a year from now, but the fishery independent data won't be able to make it into the projections, because it is just not able to be added without an assessment. That wouldn't really add anything. You could initiate the addendum now, and then have the TC tasks incorporate perhaps new FES data or landings data next year, and then the addendum could go forward a year after that is done. That is just dependent on if you want to initiate it now or then it seems to be the same.

CHAIR GATES: Initiating an addendum, we need to provide some guidance on timeline and on the risk. Adam Nowalsky.

MR. NOWALSKY: We've had discussion today about the availability of some new fishery independent survey work that would be available. I'll put on the record that I would like to see the appropriate bodies, the TC or otherwise, begin to review that, begin to decide how best to present that information in this addendum to the public.

Provide some feedback and input as to what that might mean, relative to what we've seen out of this stock assessment update, particularly to the DelMarVa region. I am comfortable if that kind of slow-walks this process. It doesn't mean that we need to see this addendum come back to us at the winter meeting.

If we don't see this again until the spring meeting or something, to give time to get this in there. I think that is an acceptable way forward, I'm seeing some nods around the table. But that is kind of what I'm thinking, based on the discussion and having given that process and those asks some consideration, like to my input into our caucus and even voting in favor of the last motion, because I am 100% in agreement with the other comments that we are putting ourselves potentially in a position where we are responding to a region that has an assessment that A, we have a lot of questions about, and B, will likely change very quickly with an upcoming benchmark with revised FES data.

I think there are a lot of variables moving forward. I think the last amendment to this plan was clear about what we had to do. Let's just proceed prudently, and educate ourselves as best as we can before we actually send this out for public comment moving forward.

DR. DREW: We can absolutely do that. We could probably bring the fishery independent data discussion to you, possibly by February,

certainly by next spring. We can do the projections to calculate what reduction we would need to get back to the target in these two regions. That could be done by February or April or May, for sure, using the existing assessment.

We would need an X percent reduction to get back to the target within whatever percent probability the Board would like to task us with. But the question would be, in developing management options. I guess, would you guys like to see that in February or May, and then understand that if we develop options for you, it would be options based on the old FES data and not on the new FES data.

Again, we can use the new FES data to do some of the reduction analysis, the size limit and bag limit analysis. There will probably not be a huge change, in terms of like the length structure of the catch. But we can't predict that. But we would, instead of taking the reduction, trying to go from like 2023 to you know current levels to 20% or 10% less than that. We would try to scale down from the FES values.

CHAIR GATES: Follow up, Adam.

MR. NOWALSKY: For the record, since Katie was looking at me during the majority of those comments. I'll take the first stab at a response. I think the idea of bringing some of that information back to us first, before incorporating the reductions into a draft addendum would be helpful.

If we saw that at the winter meeting that would also get us closer to knowing when the updated revisions will be available, for when they could be incorporate. I would like to see those things brought back before a draft addendum. Let's look at those and then decide what our next steps would be. I'm looking at the entire Board to help me out here, not just at the head of the table, where I offered that response.

CHAIR GATES: Thanks for that, Adam. We're still going to need, like how long do we want this rebuilding to take. In order for them to do the projections they are going to need a timeframe to

do them on and a risk tolerance for that. If we want a 50% probability of achieving the targets in five years, I think that is the kind of thing we need to hear. I don't know what the Board thinks of that but I think that is the kind of feedback we're looking for right now. I see Rob LaFrance and then I saw Mike Luisi after that.

MR. LaFRANCE: Matt, I guess that is the question, right? Weren't we going to inform? What I took away from Adam's comments was we needed some more information, and that we at the next meeting, winter meeting would be able to get some then, just as a report back from staff so that then we could help inform the next level, which would be the next addendum, the draft of that addendum.

I felt comfortable with that. I don't know whether we can wait, and this is I guess the question that you're asking, Matt. Can we wait until the winter meeting to make the decision about the level of reduction we have to have, because quite frankly, we need some of the information that we don't have yet.

DR. DREW: I guess that would be the question for the Board. I guess that's the thing, we're not asking you to commit to anything right now. But I would imagine it would be helpful for you as you are thinking about this to say. To have a 50% chance of reaching the target within one year you would be talking about this level of reduction. To have a 50% chance of reaching the target within three years you would need this amount of a reduction.

Maybe we can provide a couple of options for you to look at to provide context to the fishery independent discussion as well. Then at the February or May meeting you can decide on more concrete, fleshed out options for us to pursue through the addendum. I am not sure how helpful just seeing the fishery independent stuff would be without also seeing some of the projections under some scenarios.

MR. LaFRANCE: That is a great response. I appreciate that and I think that is what we want to see, the numbers associated with them, but before they actually go into an addendum, so that the Board can look at those before we need to write the addendum and that buys us potentially a little bit of time to get some of the other information that we've been looking at indices wise.

DR. DREW: It would just be helpful to the TC to like, if you guys have thoughts about what options you would like to see now, when we come back to you, not formal options, I mean, but like scenarios that you would like us to run through the projections that would be helpful for your discussion, now would be a great time. We can wing it if you guys don't have any thoughts. But if you have thoughts, it would be great for us to hear them.

CHAIR GATES: I saw Mike Luisi and I saw, Jason were you responding to this?

DR. McNAMEE: Yes, very specifically, I'll offer a 50% probability of reaching the target over three years, so there is a solid scenario. Mr. Chair, I have another risk-based thing. I'm not sure if I need to make it as a motion right now. I have it crafted as a motion, but you can come back to me for that if you want.

CHAIR GATES: Yes, I'll come back to you after I let Mike Luisi go, he had his hand up next.

MR. LUISI: We're in no rush. If there is a concern that we want to rush this thing, there is no rush intended here. The way it is laid out right now, basically those of us in DelMarVa, we're going to go back home to our stakeholders and say that we're taking management action solely based on MRIP data, and stay tuned, because we have no idea what that is going to look like in six months. We'll just wait for whatever magic happens and whatever wands wave and pixie dust gets sprinkled, and then we'll have some idea about what is next. I am in the camp of learning over the course of the next few meetings.

If in May, we get some information about fishery independent data from the DelMarVa region, and information, perhaps about the recalibration. I think a lot of that in May, if we need to put a placeholder, I would say May would be the time. We are going to be together again. These kinds of conversations can be very difficult when there are 60 people on the phone. Is the February Board meeting planned to be in person? I might be mixing up my groups, so scratch all of that. I've been doing this for too long. Yes, I'll stop at May. I think May is a good point, it will give everyone enough time. It will give me and Rich time and John to go back and work with our staff to get the information available. If you need a motion, we can probably scratch one together, but that would be our best-case scenario at this point.

CHAIR GATES: I think that timeline is okay, I don't think we need a motion for that. Thanks for that, Mike. Jason, I guess Jesse had his hand up next.

MR. HORNSTEIN: I just wanted to add an additional scenario, 50% probability of reaching F target in five years as well, just for comparison's sake.

CHAIR GATES: Okay, now you can go, Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: Just to offer, I support like what we've talked about, about kind of bringing some more information and taking a look at that, just for the record. Thank you for bringing up the risk aspect of this. I will remind, and I should have said this, Jainita is probably somewhere behind me and shooting daggers in my back. The risk policy idea kind of comes up and then it fades away, and I feel like we're in another kind of fade cycle here. I think we were supposed to do red drum, and I don't know, that fell off or something. I'm going to suggest that we do it for tautog, again. We'll try the second time, and this time I think we won't have the circumstance we had last time, so I'll make it a motion, unless I don't need to.

MS. KERNS: I think you can task the Technical Committee with running through the Risk and Uncertainty Policy if there is no objection from the rest of the Board on that front.

DR. McNAMEE: Okay, so I'll make that suggestion, and that is to implement the ASMFC Risk Policy during the Tautog Management response to the updated assessment, and to do that in parallel with now what are a couple of our standard type approaches to that. Kind of run it in parallel, so that we can see what each looks like.

DR. DREW: Right, this would still be, I guess, sort of a pilot approach. Like we might have a successful pilot, fingers crossed, for this process for tautog then.

MR. BOYLE: Okay, so just really quickly to make sure we're all on the same page. The Board is comfortable with re-meeting at the spring meeting. We can form the PDT, but the PDT will not meet putting any options together yet. The spring meeting will be to review the fishery independent new information, as well as projections for 50% to reach the target within three years and five years. If there is no more tasking, I think that's it. Thank you.

#### **CONSIDER APPROVAL OF FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW AND STATE COMPLIANCE FOR THE 2024 FISHING YEAR**

CHAIR GATES: I think we've got enough to go on there. The next item on the agenda is the Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports for 2024 fishing year. What I've been told is that we're going to try to do that via e-mail sometime in the next couple of weeks. You can expect to see an e-mail from James on that soon. We'll move that to being done by e-mail.

#### **ELECT VICE-CHAIR**

CHAIR GATES: Next item is to elect a Vice-Chair for the Tautog Management Board, and I believe we have a motion lined up.

MR. LaFRANCE: Rob LaFrance here from Connecticut, I would like to **recommend that Rich Wong of Delaware be elected as a Vice-Chair of the Tautog Management Committee.**

CHAIR GATES: Thank you, and I see Jason McNamee is the second. Any objection from Rich? All right, **any objections from the Board? Rich Wong as Vice-Chair, I don't see any objection, so I think we can congratulate Rich on moving the sanction to that position.**

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

CHAIR GATES: That brings us to any other business. Is there any other business? Jason.

#### **TIMING OF NEXT BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT**

DR. McNAMEE: I'll keep it super short, because I had tried to get this, I alluded to it several times when I was talking. I just really strongly support doing a benchmark as quickly as we can phase it in the current schedule is fine, but if there is an opportunity to do it quicker, then that would be great too. But I just want to support the getting that benchmark assessment together, and I also strongly encourage not just trying to fix some of the existing diagnostic issues in the models, which I also support, but to significantly look at moving software, like trying spatial land in particular for this. I think moving to another modeling platform might be really important for this species.

CHAIR GATES: Yes, I heard a lot of concerns and a lot of perhaps more information being brought to bear, so I would second what you're suggesting there. Any other, Other Business?

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIR GATES: All right, is there any objection to adjourning? The Tautog Board is adjourned.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, October 27, 2025)