

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION
ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD

**The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting**

May 4, 2026

Approved August 6, 2026

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INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of Proceedings of February 2026** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Move to use a steering committee process** (Page24). Motion by Shanna Madsen; second by Dave Sikorski. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 26).
4. **Move to elect Nichola Meserve as the Vice-Chair of the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board** (Page 29). Motion by Megan Ware; seconded by John Clark. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 29).
5. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 30).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for C. Wilson (AA)	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)
Steve Train, ME (GA)	Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Kevin Sullivan, NH, proxy for Renee Zobel (AA)	John Clark, DE (AA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)	Michael Luisi, MD, proxy for K. Charbonneau (AA)
Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)	Robert T. Brown, MD, proxy for R. Dize (GA)
Ray Kane, MA (GA)	David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA, proxy for Rep. Armini (LA)	Joe Grist, VA (Acting AA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	JJ Minor, VA (GA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Shanna Madsen, CT (AA)	Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Daniel Ryan, DC
Robert LaFrance, CT, proxy for Rep. Gresko (LA)	Ron Owens, PRFC
Marty Gary, NY (AA)	Max Appleman, NMFS
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Lowell Whitney, US FWS
Kris Kuhn, PA, proxy for T. Schaeffer (AA)	

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

Ex-Officio Members

Jeff Mercer, Law Enforcement Committee Rep.

Staff

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

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Monday, May 4, 2026, and was called to order at 1:15 p.m. by Chair Chris Batsavage.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to call the Striped Bass Management Board meeting to order. My name is Chris Batsavage; I'm the Administrative Proxy from North Carolina and I'll be serving as Chair. Before I go to board consent on the agenda, I will check with Toni Kerns and see which Commissioner's Board members are online.

MS. TONI KERNS: I believe it is just Monica Martinez from New York.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thanks, Toni. Start off with.

MR. JOSEPH GRIST: James Minor is also on.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thanks, Joe. All right, start off with approval of the agenda. Are there any modifications to the agenda that anyone would like to make. Seeing none then that is approved.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next is approval of the proceedings from the February, 2026 Board Meeting. Are there any modifications to the proceedings that anyone would like to offer? Seeing none; those are approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next up is Public Comment. This is an opportunity for members of the public to provide comment on items not on the agenda. If there is time later on, I will try to

offer a little bit of time for the public to provide comments on those particular items, but just checking for anything not on the agenda if you have any comments. None in the room and none online.

DISCUSS 2027 BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next up is our first main item on the agenda, which is the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment Biological Reference Points and Spatial Management. Katie Drew will be doing a presentation on that, so Katie, whenever you're ready.

DR. KATIE DREW: Basically, today I'm just going to give you a quick, one-slide background on our current BRPs and then go to the topics that we're looking for Board input on, most notably sort of the question of balancing SSB and F, as well as sort of spatial management and what the Board's objectives and desires are on that. Then just a quick timeline of next steps. As a reminder, I think there have been some questions about, can we achieve the current target and threshold. We can say that striped bass were near or above the SSB target and the F threshold for about 2000 to 2010, which is this period highlighted in the box on the graph of recruitment. What we're pointing out with this graph is that that period of high SSB and high F was supported by a series of very strong year classes from 1993 to 2003, which are highlighted with those yellow bars.

You can see that recruitment has dropped off since then. While the SSB target is still attainable, the F rate required to do so under our current low or very low recruitment levels, may not be acceptable or palatable managers and stakeholders' level with the current recruitment. I think we came to the Board and said, interested in maybe some potential alternatives to this.

We will be exploring other reference point definitions to address TOR Number 6 as part of this assessment. We will be looking at model-based reference points like SPR or MSY proxies where we can.

**PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO STOCK ASSESSMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BIOLOGICAL REFERENCE
POINTS AND SPATIAL MANAGEMENT**

DR. DREW: But we are also interested in hearing some guidance from the Board about how did the Board want to balance preserving SSB and allowing fishing, and what did the Board want from a spatial management framework as we go forward with this assessment?

At this point we don't need Board consensus on these issues and we don't need a specific BRP definition. We are just looking for some input to help the SAS develop some options going forward, so a range of opinions and kind of like what are the factors that you're thinking about and that you consider most important for managing the species.

As we work through the science, we can be keeping your objectives in mind and developing something that is scientifically appropriate, but also meets your management objectives as we go through this. In terms of the question of sort of balancing SSB and F. There is a tradeoff between preserving SSB and allowing F.

A higher fishing mortality is going to lead you to a lower SSB, whereas a higher SSB will require a lower F to maintain that SSB level. Lowering the SSB reference points would allow for a higher F target and a higher F threshold, but will not necessarily increase catch. This is because SSB is really a proxy for larger fish in the ocean region. Lower SSB means lower abundance of 28 inch plus fish in general.

Therefore, lower catch rates and encounter rates in the ocean fishery. It would be helpful to receive input on a number of things. We showed this last time around. I'm just going to highlight a couple of the ones in bold here, which are maybe more graspable in our time here today, which is for example, a preferred historical time period for F reference points and/or for SSB reference points when you are

satisfied with fishery performance, either as a target to shoot for or a level that you do not want to go below.

In terms of the lower limit on acceptable SSBs relative to 1995 levels, or based on a historical time period. We can also think about or talk about the relative importance of maximizing yield versus maximizing catch rates or the availability of trophy sized fish, or acceptable levels of risk or other metrics, in terms of stock health, like not just SSB but abundance of specific age or size classes and things like that. This is sort of the question on balancing SSB and F, and this is really relevant to kind of our more empirically derived reference points. Obviously, like I said, we'll be trying for model-based reference points. They have not always worked out for this model in the past, which is why we have continued to move forward with the empirical reference points. But the empirical reference points require more management guidance, in terms of setting targets and thresholds.

The other side of this that we are also working towards a spatial model for this benchmark, which presents sort of additional questions or additional challenges for management. If this model does not pass peer review again, then this part is somewhat moot. But I think we are striving for a more spatially informed model.

Currently we have a single set of coastwide reference points for this coastwide sort of meta complex of striped bass, with separate regional management regimes. We do not have separate reference points for our different producer areas and the ocean, but we still have the flexibility of allowing different management measures and different management objectives in those regions to account for differences in the availability of fish, and the differences in those fisheries at that level.

This is something that we can maintain going forward. A spatial model we can still maintain a single overall reference point if we so desire, and then have spatial management regimes. But we are interested in knowing if the Board is truly interested in spatial reference points, that is having specific

targets and thresholds by region to evaluate stock status against, or again would you prefer to keep out current approach and just use a more spatially informed model.

I think one of the things to think about as you are sort of debating this is, you know what happens when one region exceeds the F threshold and another region does not, or in the case of sort of multi-stock reference points. What happens when one stock is overfished or experiencing overfishing and the other stocks are not? How is that managed in our mixed stock fisheries?

The other question is kind of what to do with Delaware Bay in particular. We are exploring the option of trying to model Delaware Bay separately, but the data for that stuff is more limited than for the other two regions, and as a result you know we may not be able to actually model Delaware Bay separately. In that case what happens to Delaware Bay is it lumped in with the Chesapeake Bay, is it lumped in with the Ocean region?

That is something that we can, there are different implications for that within the model, neither one is more right or more wrong, it just depends on kind of what do you want to do with Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay and the Ocean as separate regimes or separate regions that reflect differences in fishing mortality, fishing effort within the model.

Combining Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay is sort of more in line with recent research on the genetic similarity of these fish, and the frequent movement of fish between the Bays via the C and D canal. We can model it both ways, and like I said, they would be sort of equally accurate or equally inaccurate, different assumptions and different implications for the model.

Then a third question of, is the Board interested in developing BRPs for the Hudson River specifically if the data supported that, as

opposed to kind of this combined ocean region. In terms of next steps, ideally the Board will provide some guidance or some thoughts, some feelings to the SAS that we can consider as we go forward. Obviously, we are going to focus on sort of what is the best use of the data, the best scientific and biological approach to these models from our technical perspective.

But there are aspects of this that rely on management objectives. The right reference point will depend in part on how well you meet your management objectives, and that is what we're hoping to get from the Board today, so that we can provide you with something that is both technically and scientifically accurate and defensible, but also addresses your objectives.

Over the summer we'll work on incorporating your feedback into our BRP options as we continue with the assessment. We will have our assessment workshop the week of August 24, and then sometime in March we will have the review workshop that is going to be the spring research track. I do not believe we have specific dates for that yet.

At that point the Peer Review Panel will provide some feedback on the reference points, either the specific reference points that are chosen or maybe the methods to develop those reference points. That when you come back to, at the spring or the summer meeting, you will receive this assessment as well as BRP options for consideration. With that I am happy to take questions, or ideally, some guidance from the Board.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thanks, Katie. We'll start with any questions Board members have on what Katie just presented. Once we kind of get past that question today I'll be looking for any input that Katie has requested. A show of hands here, start down the left side of the table, my left at least, Jason McNamee followed up by Bill Hyatt.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: Thank you, Katie. This is a question to start matters. With the empirical reference point, I remember there was like an

evolution there, so they had set that SSB reference points in 1995. But then I remember early on in my tenure on this Board there was like this disconnect between the F metric in that point and time. Can you remind me? Like I know we connected them at one point, but I can't remember exactly what it was that we did to make them kind of congruent.

DR. DREW: Right, so for a while the SSB reference point was that 1995 value and then the F reference point was FMSY. But we found out during, I think it was the 2013 assessment, that basically if you project the population forward at FMSY you don't get back to the 1995 value. You actually get back to a lower SSB level.

We have concerns about the reliability of the stock recruit relationship that was needed to calculate FMSY and we had concerns about how well that would fit and how accurate that was. Given that the Board had sort of expressed a preference for, within the document the management itself.

The objective was really focused on expanding that age structure, things like that, so we kept the 1995 SSB value and then calculated the F value that you would need to get there under recent recruitment. Basically, from about the time, slightly before the stock was rebuilt to the most recent terminal year, drawing from that recruitment. The other option would be to pick a fishing mortality rate that the Board was satisfied with or that they wanted to aim towards, and then accept the SSB that you end up with as your target and threshold. I think that is kind of, if the Board has preferences on that and would like to see that explored, I think we could definitely do that.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next up I have Bill Hyatt.

MR. WILLIAM HYATT: This is a question that I'm hoping leads to a suggestion. It has to do with the balance between yield and catch rate. I think that is going to be important in the

discussions as we go forward. The question is, do you feel that for striped bass, for the striped bass recreational fishery that there is enough economic data on that fishery available to provide some insights that would guide us trying to make that balance?

I'm asking it from the context, you know a lot of the fisheries that we discuss around this table everybody brings up economic data, and it is sort of like there is a vacuum there. There just isn't enough data to have a meaningful discussion. On the other hand, I'm very well aware that for many recreational fisheries, marine and inland, there is sufficient data to kind of guide those tradeoffs and sort of quantify what those tradeoffs actually mean to the communities involved.

Question, is your knowledge of the economic data associated with the coastal striped bass recreational fishery. Do you believe that there is sufficient data, and then if so a suggestion that that should be a significant part of what we look at going forward.

DR. DREW: I would say probably the economic data for striped bass are better than some of our other species. I think that whether we could, how robust and quantitative we could be, in terms of developing options that maximize economic value, as opposed to maximizing yield. I don't know if we're there yet.

There is a Recreational Demand Model being built for striped bass to kind of help answer some of these questions and help get input from anglers on sort of preferred feedback, or preferred tradeoffs or preferred management measures, in terms of some of these questions. I don't know that we will have enough economic data to build something truly robust and quantitative in that sense.

But if the Board would like to consider. I mean there are things we can provide sort of on the modeling side, in terms of things like what does this reference point translate into, not into total SSB, but into maybe your abundance or your perceived catch rates or is it more important to you to be able to go out and catch a lot of fish, even if you can't

keep all of them, or is more important for you to go out and catch a keeper?

Is it more important to you to go out and catch and keep something, even if it is small. These are the kinds of questions we will possibly be able to get at through some of the current research. But we can at least present strategies to maximize each of those outcomes, if you will. But the circumstance, all we're controlling is sort of turning that dial on fishing mortality. What matters to the stock is how hard you're fishing. The economics, I think come into play, in terms of the preferred management options to control and keep you at that F. But the F that you need is more about what is your goal for the fishery for the stock. I don't know if that is helpful or not.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Do you have a follow up?

MR. HYATT: No, it is. Just a quick follow up. What I was hoping is that there would be enough information there to at least translate a tradeoff between yield and catch rate into how it would influence trips, trips associated with certain expenditures, et cetera. I suspect that there is enough to tease some of that out at least, maybe not at the 5,000-foot level, but the 10,000- or 20,000-foot level. That is what I would be looking for.

MS. KERNS: I don't know if there is, Bill. I think it depends on when the last time MRIP asked some economic questions of the striped bass surveys, and they do some economic add-on questions, and I just don't know when that last was. I'll doublecheck with the folks that are working on the Recreational Demand Model, to see if we had any tradeoff questions in that avenue. But that model is not going to be done in time for August.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Show of hands again. I had Shanna and Mike. I have a few on my list here so I'll start with Shanna Madsen.

MS. SHANNA MADSEN: My question is probably for Toni and Katie. I'm trying to kind of think through the timelines associated with, also what we're going to be speaking about next, our work group. What I'm trying to think about is, if we give you some level of guidance, some BRPs we might like to see today. Those will go through the assessment; we'll get those back out on the other end in 2027. If we decide at that point that we would like to see some other level of BRPs did those need to also be peer reviewed, in order for them to be applied?

DR. DREW: Yes. I think we do need our reference points to be peer reviewed. Now, I think we can provide. What we've done with ERPs, as you know, is we've provided a method that got peer reviewed. Then the Board was allowed to sort of use that tool to come up with a reference point that met their objective.

Depending on the feedback that we get from the group today, try to come up with something that, and make it clear to the Peer Review as we go through that this is a tool to help the Board meet its management objectives. Depending on sort of what those objectives are, there may be room to change the final value, or to change sort of that balance, as long as the Peer Review Panel signs off on that.

The Peer Review Panel may come back and be like, no this is a terrible idea, you are going to pick F40% and you are going to like it. But we will try to come up with something, especially like I said, if we don't have like a real strong vision from the Board at this moment. Try to come up with something that can allow a little bit of flexibility down the road once the Board has dived into some of these questions a little more.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Follow up.

MS. MADSEN: Thank you, Katie, I think that helps a ton to clarify kind of exactly what I am thinking, as far as like timelines integrating this into this work group that we will be discussing. To follow up to my question. I guess I would go ahead and just give you a suggestion since I'm here and I'm on it.

My suggestion would be to do something just like that, keeping the tool itself flexible such that whatever comes out on the other end, like we did for ERPs kind of gives us a chance to maybe reevaluate some of our management objectives, such that those ERPs might vary. But we're using the same tool that has gone through peer review to get there. That is my thought process.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Mike Luisi.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: Dr. Drew, a couple slides back there was some reference to the spatial management part that you're looking for some advice on. I'm trying to understand so that I can communicate this effectively with my stakeholders in Maryland. In Maryland there is constant ask. There is an ask all the time as to when is Maryland/Virginia going to be able to manage the Chesapeake Bay with that Chesapeake Bay reference point?

This is not a new conversation; this is something that has been around for a decade plus. At the last benchmark assessment there was some exploration through that process that did not lead to a peer reviewed approval. In your slide you spoke about. The question is, on your slide that spoke about having one reference point for the coast and then having spatial regimes. Is that what wasn't approved the last time, or was it specific Bay reference points for the different areas that would be deemed as, I guess the nursery areas?

DR. DREW: What was not approved last time was the spatial model. The spatial model had stock-specific reference points as well as sort of the fishing mortality that the Chesapeake Bay stock was experiencing in the Bay and in the ocean. There was a combination of sort of stock and spatial dynamics.

We developed reference points that would, there was a spatial component to the reference points. The Peer Review Panel did not love some of the choices that we made on that

front, and I think gave us some feedback about how to go forward with kind of the idea of a spatial approach or a stock-specific approach, those kinds of questions.

I would say it's not that those specific definitions failed last time, it was more like the larger model wasn't ready to provide that information yet. We're going to try again this time. I think one of the things that we are interested in knowing is like if you guys, if that continues to be a priority for you to have spatial specific reference points, and if so at what kind of spatial level?

I think there is definitely sort of nuances to that at thinking things through like, what happens if one region exceeds their target and the other does not, but the stock overall is healthy, those kinds of questions, which is more of a management question. But yes, I don't know if that answers your question or not.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Follow up, Mike?

MR. LUISI: Just to kind of tie a bow on this. My advice would be, and it sounds like you are already moving in that direction to continue to explore the modeling approaches that would be used to establish spatial reference points. I'm not going to go on the record today and say that if that were to be the case that we would implement.

You know I would like to learn from it and understand the interplay between the different components of the stock, and to understand how managing one independently of the other could result in benefits to the entire stock. I don't know enough, I haven't seen enough.

Obviously, it wasn't supported by the Peer Review last time to really get into it. But I like the idea. I hope that we'll continue to move in that direction, and then have the opportunity to review, evaluate and understand the results, so that we can make decisions down the road.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thank you for the update, Katie. I had a question. The graph you shared, I've been one of the people that brought up the reference points, especially for the SSB, that the target has seemed very high, and especially when you look at the SSB during the 2000s, when we were at historically high population of striped bass.

The graph you showed there, you said it was exceeding the target during the entire 2000s, right, during the aughts. Whereas, the one on the website shows it just barely, I mean it passes the target maybe four years out of the aughts, and the previous assessment. I remember it may have surpassed the target, so maybe just two years, and yet the F we're working with is based on the target, correct? Like we're trying to achieve that.

DR. DREW: Right, the size specifically says near or above the SSB target, so it included basically the confidence intervals included to the target for these years. It was similar to the target, and it's true, it only exceeded the target for a few years out of there, but it was close to there.

MR. CLARK: Right, and that's with the most recent assessment. But in previous assessments, I remember the one previous to this. I think it only surpassed the target once or twice during that time. Once again, I'm just kind of curious, because this makes it look like setting F to the target is not setting a really high reference point for SSB. Whereas, I think overall the target is a very high SSB, because when I see that and I recall what the striped bass population was in Delaware Bay during the aughts, it was really huge compared to where it is now.

DR. DREW: Right, and I think, so the point of this slide was, you know we've had questions of can you reach the target, and the answer is yes. We can and we have in the past. However, where we are now in terms of recruit. During that time, we were also overfishing, basically that entire time.

The fishery seemed great, in terms of a ton of fish out there, we had a ton of catch et cetera. But it was also supported by a lot of these really strong year classes that were coming in and sort of replacing that essentially overfished, overfishing levels. Again, it's biologically attainable, yes. Is it attainable from a management/stakeholder perspective now?

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Emerson Hasbrouck.

MR. EMERSON HASBROUCK: Thank you, Dr. Drew for your presentation. Dr. Drew, one of the slides that you had up there, I don't remember which one it was. One of the bullets was maximizing yield versus maximizing catch rate. For that bullet are you defining yield as SSB?

DR. DREW: I think in that case we would be defining yield as the traditional sense of harvest.

MR. HASBROUCK: Okay.

DR. DREW: That can be in terms of a small number of very large heavy fish or a large number of very small fish.

MR. HASBROUCK: That's not really exclusive then of maximizing catch rates, right, because catch rates are going to include harvest.

DR. DREW: Right, do you want to maximize the number of fish out there that you can encounter, or how often you can catch them, or do you want to maximize sort of how many of them you can land? To get high catch you've got to have a higher abundance out there. But you can get high yield by applying a heavy F to a small population, or you can get that same yield by applying a very low F to a large population.

Those will have different implications, depending on are you landing all those fish and taking them back, and it takes you a while to do that, or are you going out and catching and releasing a lot, but there is a lot of them out there to be available to you. The restrictions on them are just very tight. That is kind of where you can get to the same yield, but can you

get to the same fishery experience in those different scenarios.

MR. HASBROUCK: The second part of my question goes to using stock recruitment relationship. I think you mentioned that it was a question about using that stock recruitment relationship to calculate MSY. We kind of abandoned that stock recruitment relationship, so is that where we are right now that there is no stock recruitment relationship with striped bass?

DR. DREW: There is clearly some kind of stock recruit relationship, right. If you don't have spawning stock biomass you won't get any recruitment. You have some spawning stock biomass you are going to get some recruitment. But for striped bass I think there were two factors that we were concerned about, which is number one, the strong environmental influence on the actual recruitment that you see.

There is a lot of variability of right now we're sort of at a level of SSB that we were at in the early '90s, and yet the recruitment levels that we have seen are nowhere near that. Then the issue with that is that then the reference points are very sensitive to what you're assuming about or what you're estimating that steepness as in that relationship, and small changes in adding years of data, even though the sort of scatter plot doesn't look that different, it can affect the fit and can change the reference point from year to year if there is a lot of uncertainty or a lot of noise in that relationship.

MR. HASBROUCK: That was a good answer and we rushed right into the next part of the same question. Is there a minimum SSB that needs to be maintained, because as you just inferred, the environmental conditions kind of outweigh what is going on with SSB, in terms of recruitment. We can't control those environmental conditions, but we can try to control SSB.

But if there is no stock recruit relationship there, has anybody looked at, do we need to maintain a minimum SSB, you know to generate a good year class when we've got good environmental conditions. I mean there has to be some spawning adults in the population, but is there a minimum number?

DR. DREW: We have not looked at that. That is something we could potentially look at a little more. You know I think we do have a fairly decent history of extremely low SSB and extremely low recruitment. Can we parse that apart from the environmental effect that we're seeing? I don't know, but that is something we can look into a little more with this assessment.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Roy Miller.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: I wanted to just perhaps move off of that topic and focus a little bit on the question that you asked earlier with regard to spatial management, specifically the Delaware Bay stock. If you were to ask me, I kind of have mixed feelings about whether the Delaware Bay stock should be managed separately, or that it should be lumped in with the Chesapeake, or whether it should be managed as at present as part of the coastal stock.

I recall that we explored Delaware Bay separate management back in, I guess it was the late 1990s, and using tag-based estimates of that. The results were a little scary in that we decided that perhaps it wouldn't be a good idea to manage the Delaware Bay separately, based on those tag-based estimates.

I'm not sure which is the best way to go, but certainly, Katie, you hit upon the logic of the situation of the passage to and from the C & D Canal, both in terms of spawning adults moving and fry moving towards the Delaware Estuary. As I recall the net hydrological models showed that there was a tendency for the larvae to be carried into the Delaware system, more so than into the Chesapeake system from spawning in the canal.

I'm not entirely sure where we should go with this. But I think if you ask me for my opinion, I think it's logical to lump the Chesapeake and Delaware. Now, Maryland may not welcome us, I don't know. Virginia might not either, but anyway. I just thought I would lay that out there. Thank you.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: I have a few more hands in the queue with questions, and I think from there we will probably transition over to providing some guidance to the SAS on Biological Reference Points and spatial management. Next up I have Doug Grout. Doug.

MR. DOUGLAS E. GROUT: I was going to ask you, are you ready for suggestions, because obviously there have been a couple commenters that have had valid good questions that they provided. I can put it off, but I have a couple of suggestions that I would like to bring forward. If you would rather me wait, I will be glad to until all the questions are through.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: I think now is fine, even if there may be some general questions after that, while you have the mic, yes, please.

MR. GROUT: When Roy Miller and I were on the Technical Committee back in the '80s and '90s, and we were trying to figure out what a number of very intelligent scientists, when we were going to figure out how we were going to figure out we were recovered, because we had the '82 year class, which you look at it now and it's nothing, and even an '89 year class is modest at best.

But then we got the 1993-year class and we knew we were on the right road at that point. But we were looking back at what occurred when we believed that the stock was healthy, which was back in the '60s. The thing that I remember noticing was you had strong year classes every 3 to 5 years that would show up very regularly. That is what we were kind of shooting for.

Once we saw periodic year strong year classes or dominant year classes every 3 to 5 years, it seemed like the stock would be healthy at that point. If that turned out that the Boards, and we said, well, 1995, we're here, this is a good level to shoot for. It seemed like a good level to shoot for, particularly with the kind of recruitment we were getting.

We were getting dominant year classes every 3 or 4 years. Fast forward to today, and we have had one strong year class in a decade, past decade. Clearly something has changed. I don't think we've really figured out what that is, whether it be temperature or flows, is there more predation going on than on some of the larval striped bass in the past.

But for whatever reason we are not getting nearly the year classes from the SSB we have right now that used to produce strong year classes. One of the things that I would like to suggest to the Technical Committee and SAS is to recognize this lack of productivity in developing the new threshold reference points.

I always look at targets as more of a management and threshold is something we don't want to go below, because we're afraid the stock is going to go down and eventually collapse because of that. That is one of the main things that I wanted to bring forward. I also kind of looked at this four years' worth of data that we had from the last stock assessment, and I noticed that we had some dominant year classes that were produced with SSB that was actually less than what our current target is.

For example, that very strong 1993-year class was produced with a female SSB of 73,000 metric tons. The most recent strong year class that we had or dominant year class was the 2015 one, and that was produced with an SSB of 67,000 metric tons. Maybe looking at that, it's not an exact stock recruitment relationship. But looking at what are the lower levels of SSB that have, when the conditions are right, the ability to produce a dominant year class or a strong year class, and that could be our threshold. Then the management could figure out what the target is.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: A couple other hands, and for those folks if you have some input as well, you can give that too. But I have Marty Gary followed up by Nichola Meserve.

MR. MARTIN GARY: Sounds like you are transitioning into comments, so I do have a lingering question, so I'll use my turn to couple a question for Katie and a comment. The question, I know you touched on it a few times in the conversation already, Katie.

But I was hoping for a very distilled version of, so how do we manage these spatial BRPs when they aren't being fished independently, when there is a coastal take of mixed stock. I guess that could apply to the Hudson, Chesapeake and Delaware, so that is the question. Then I've got a quick comment after, Mr. Chair.

DR. DREW: There are two ways to do it, one of which is through a stock-specific reference point where you evaluate the fishing mortality that that stock is experiencing throughout its life. Again, in each region, and then decide. I think that would be maybe a question for the Board is, do you want to manage to the most sensitive stock in that complex?

If one stock is experiencing overfishing or is overfished under our current management regime, would you then take action on the fisheries that are exploiting that stock, so the mixed stock fishery and potentially the producer area fishery that it is coming from? That would mean that even if part of that stock complex is not overfished or experiencing overfishing, you would still need to be restrictive in that sense.

The other option would be to have sort of a fishing mortality rate apply to the regions, and say if fishing mortality overall in this region is too high, then we will bring it down and sort of not link it to specific necessarily stocks, but more about what is happening to either the stock's complex as a unit or each individual stock within that, you know if we exceed that

reference point for the stock in that region then we would reduce fishing mortality in that region.

I think there is still the question of, what do you do if one region is exceeding the threshold, but the overall stock is not. But those are things I think we can sort out, maybe at the Board level of, in terms of thinking about it as allocating fishing effort or allocating fishing mortality instead of allocating yield.

MR. GARY: Quick comment, Mr. Chair. Thanks, Katie. You know having experienced that would put it in the camp back in the day when Louis Rugolo et al and the Harvest Control Model in Maryland, and the desire for the two-fleet paradigm was in place. Being at that meeting in Connecticut in 2014, when we tried desperately to hold onto that two-fleet system, and we acquiesced, obviously.

We changed to a coastal unit of management. I just feel like the uncertainty of what we're dealing with and listening to Doug Grout's comments, and looking at what has been happening these last few years. If you haven't paid attention to what has happened this spring, your flows in the Chesapeake are at like record levels. The Potomac is at 131-year low level. It's like no snow packs and what not. Things are so fundamentally different from the time that Doug explained or described. I'm not adverse to exploring the spatial nuances, but given the uncertainty of this stock and the complexity that this presents, I'm just very reticent to pursue it, thanks.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next up is Nichola.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: I just wanted to reflect on some of the original rationale for the 1995 SSB as a reference point, and that having to do with the expanding age structure. That is something I would like to continue to see reference points focus on, is that wide age structure both from a stock resiliency perspective, as well as the fishery experience that results from it.

I would be surprised if MSY type reference points would lead us in that direction. One concern that I

have with the current or with SSB reference points in general, whether it is 1995 or some other is that based on our current situation it can be masking other signs in the fishery. Right now, we have the assessment projecting that SSB may rebuild in a short number of years while abundance is below 1995 levels.

I am concerned that if we continue to just focus on SSB that it would be kind of a short-lived management response and ignoring what is coming down the road. If the SAS could give some thought to maybe a secondary reference point or somehow incorporating total abundance as well into the reference points that might be something worth consideration.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Jay McNamee:

DR. JASON McNAMEE: These are like ideas, direct guidance I guess I'll call it. I'll start with this first one, you know thinking about, I know we've had this discussion probably annually about MSY reference points and this like many stocks that we manage at the ASMFC the stock recruit relationship is not there.

Therefore, you cannot calculate the MSY reference point. But I am having some optimism that maybe the spatial model does a little magic and we're able to sort of understand. I'm not sure how it's going to treat recruitment. But all that being said, I think it is a big enough change that it is worth exploring, calculating an actual MSY reference point again. I think it is a worthwhile exercise.

Then I started thinking about, again my preference is always the happiest things, at least like connected within the machinery and so SPR is another version of that if we can't quite figure out the exact stock recruit relationship then we can base it around some other metrics, SPR being one of them.

I probably read a little too much into the memo, but I was thinking SPR 40% is sort of like a common one we use. It is considered to be

conservative for the most part. I was thinking maybe the hesitancy there is that it kind of slides that reference point way too far down the curb. We've seen that tautog is an example of that, where you can kind of get that reference point to be way off that peak of abundance. That concern I think is fair. Then I started looking for other examples that are kind of like striped bass that use different SPR calculations, and the answer is there are not very many. The only versions that I saw where there was SPR 45% and SPR 50% was like reef fish that are hermaphrodite, with these atypical like traits. But all that being said, I think that would be worthwhile to do like a higher SPR, something that is even more conservative than F40%, so we can kind of take a look at that and it's connected to the model.

I think that would be a good way to go. I threw a lot of numbers out there at you, so maybe pick two of them, like a standard 40% and then add a 50% and just stick with those two. In the back of my mind, I'm wondering if there was actually some technical reason why we weren't using SPR reference points already, but maybe Kate, you can comment on that.

But let me get these last couple of things out and then I'll stop talking. Okay so there is some guidance. Then the empirical reference point, I think the nice thing about it is it's tractable, it's easy to sort of talk about and we all kind of understand it. I apologize if I'm just repeating what Doug has already said. If it is, then I support what Doug said.

I was wondering if, so right now the way the reference point is set up is it's the threshold that is set at that 1995 level, and then we bump the target up by 25% from that. I wondered if maybe we want to just set the target at that 1995 level, so we've seen it, right. That could be a spot that the stock could get to.

Then just flip the threshold to be 25% less than that. Just for context, another empirical reference point and then quickly, you said a couple comments about spatial management. Just from experience with other species. There has been concern by peer

review panels about like calling it F, I guess I'll say it that way.

I think what you said before, Katie, to Marty's comment is in reference to that. I guess the comment I was going to make on this topic is, instead of trying to make like F reference points, spatially explicit, we could use other metrics like exploitation or something like that. Then we would have to sort of define the biomass level in these areas.

But we could use the different surveys in the areas that kind of guide us on that. Something like an exploitation rate that has some spatial X+ that is spatially explicit would be worthwhile. But I just worry a little bit about kind of defining different Fs for what is a single stock of fish in the end. I'll pause it there, and Katie if you have a comment to that, like technical issue with SPR I would be interested to hear that.

DR. DREW: We did look at SPR during the last benchmark assessment, and we found for the single stock non spatial model, like the F40% was very similar to either the F target or the F threshold that we were getting, but the projected SSB was much higher than the reference points. And since at that point the Board had already been making noises about those reference points are too high, we are like there is some kind of disconnect there that we are not capturing.

We did not have that same problem with the spatial model, which was also sex specific, so there may be some kind of sex and the differences in migration and the different rates that would do with this, the population is exposed to the different fisheries and the sexual dimorphism and growth may not be captured as well by the SPR reference point and the single-stock model that we were using at the time. That is kind of why we stayed with the current empirical reference points. I think we'll definitely take a look at it again for this benchmark. We can look at those numbers for sure and see if they are performing better or

more intuitively with this either spatial model or the WAM model.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Craig Pugh.

MR. CRAIG PUGH: Thank you, Dr. Drew, is there a time constraint that is aligned with your spatial reference points?

DR. DREW: You mean time constraint in the sense of like over a specific set of years?

MR. PUGH: No, collection period. As you collect that spatial period, how does it focus on that time period of when you collected? As a fisherman that's our ultimate information. We base everything on that space at that time. If you are one day off, but you think because it is the fourth of May this year, it's not the same space as the fourth of May next year.

Being within that realm you can be very accurate, but I know from watching this for over 40 years, if I take that May 4 date and go back to that same spot, my data is going to be totally erratic and there is no congruency there whatsoever to give you good, solid information. That's what I'm getting at, how do we get to a better place and more accurate place?

I know that can be achieved, we've done it, we're doing that already in the fishery. That is what I am kind of asking. Is there that time constraint now, if not how do you apply that? I think your information will probably show you a lot more success instead of the line being jagged and up and down, up and down, it should level, what you do, so you are better upgrade or downgrade by collecting information that way. Thank you.

DR. DREW: Currently the model only uses like the full year, so it's just what happened in that year. The F over that whole year essentially averaged, well the model averages over the whole year. The spatial model is using sort of a two-season time step, so it's like the first half of the year which includes the spawning and the time in the producer areas.

Then the second half of the year, which is where the adult spawners have moved back out into the ocean., and so we're sort of looking at what happened from January to June and then what happened from July to August, as two separate time steps and two blocks of data within the model for every year.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any other guidance from Board members? John Clark.

MR. CLARK: Yes, just so it is on the record as guidance recommendation. I would very much like to see a spatial analysis where the Delaware is combined with the Chesapeake. I think both the genetic and especially the telemetry data that Delaware has accumulated over the years makes it very clear that this is one population now, I mean you know one super producer. As you know, we've been asking for producer status for the Delaware again for years. This would allow us to look at that in conjunction with the Chesapeake. Of course, I assume by asking for anything like this that an analysis done the previous way with just the Chesapeake separately would be done.

We can look at the results of the two different analyses. I know that is more work, sorry about that. But it would be very interesting, I think to see how that comes out, and then further guidance, I agree with Jay that looking at the 1995 reference points with the current threshold being used as a target would be good to pursue also.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Just one last call, Megan Ware.

MS. MEGAN WARE: Yes, it's been interesting hearing everyone. I'll kind of just comment. I think one of my concerns, and this would be a sign of a reference point that is not working is, in terms of availability or abundance. I think if we have a contraction of that we usually feel it first at the ends of the stock, i.e. in Maine.

I think the concern of Maine anglers is going to be maintaining some level of availability or abundance if there is still access to resource at the edges of the stock. I think a reference point that doesn't achieve that is not a successful reference point from my point. That is really more in the like feeling side of it. I don't have a mathematical number for what that is, Katie. I'm just trying to think of science of things that wouldn't be palatable in Maine.

DR. DREW: Yes, we can probably do something similar to the sort of analysis that I think Emerson and Doug had proposed on the recruitment side of like what level of SSB gives you, still produces strong year classes. We can look at sort of what level of SSB or abundance or age structure produces a strong availability at the end of the range versus not.

Can we finagle a reference point out of that? No, but maybe we can help evaluate some of the other reference points using that. I think back to the Delaware Bay question. I don't want to trivialize the amount of work it takes to do it both ways, so I don't actually know if we could do it both ways.

In terms of like the model structure and how we calculate the data, and also like the way the model works is it relies on understanding the movement rates in and out of that Bay area, so like the rate of fish moving out of Chesapeake Bay into the ocean and from the ocean into the Bay, during the year to parameterize that.

It's not just a matter of like letting the data out, putting it with one versus the other. There are other changes that have to be made. I don't want to like say that, oh yes, we can do it both ways and then look at it. I would like us to pick a base case, if possible, at this point, so that we have guidance and can stay focused on that model development going forward.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Follow up, John?

MR. CLARK: Well, it's kind of like the chicken and the egg, right? I mean we don't really know how it would work until we see it, but if we see it, we may

want the standard model that you've been using. Yes, sorry, it's kind of a conundrum here, because it would be very interesting to see the Delaware combined with the Chesapeake.

Of course, if it is for the detriment of the Chesapeake states, we certainly wouldn't want to pursue that. But the question is, is there any way we could know? Is there like a preliminary work that could be done, to at least give us some sort of idea of where this would end up?

DR. DREW: I would be concerned about that with the timeline that we are on for completion of the model. Essentially, I do not want to develop two models at the same time and two data streams at the same time, when we are trying to make the March deadline. I will say, the Delaware Bay landings are small compared to both the Chesapeake Bay and the Ocean.

I don't think it would have a significant impact on the overall results from both regions, whether we put you with Chesapeake Bay or whether we put you with the Ocean. I think they are just sort of like maybe more management or implications for this of understanding this F rate, what does it represent?

Therefore, how should you respond to it? What is the most efficient or concise way of responding to this fishing mortality rate in this region versus this other region. Whereas, right now you are allowed, you have a separate management regime, even though you are part of the Ocean, you have a separate management regime to account for the differences in availability of fish to that fishery.

That is maybe more aligned with what is happening in the Chesapeake Bay than what is happening in the Ocean. Does it make sense or like is there a management benefit to pooling these two regions together? Even if there is not a benefit, does it make people deeply uncomfortable one way or the other?

I don't think where we put Delaware is going to make or break a specific region or specific assessment. Delaware Bay. But I guess I also don't want us to put, it's not trivial to develop these models at these different sections.

MR. CLARK: I understand, thanks, Katie. I mean that is the crux of the issue though is what it would do to management. I think as you know, we've had a separate recreational slot fishery in Delaware Bay for the past 10 years. But you know, we could see some advantages if we were able to manage more like the Chesapeake does recreationally, because of course that smaller size is available pretty much year-round in Delaware.

We do have to take resident population of striped bass. For the commercial side, of course as we've been saying for years, you know '72 to '79 landings were not favorable to Delaware. We would like to see something that might fix that. But again, you know I understand it is really a difficult to say do it one way and the other way so we can see them both, but that would probably be the ideal.

MS. KERNS: John, I think she's saying we can't do it both ways, so we need the Board to tell us one way or the other.

MR. CLARK: Yes, I'm guessing at that. I would, and I'm sure that we'll be in the minority, but I would like to see it that way then, the combined.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Is there any opposition to that being combined?

MS. KERNS: The spatial scale would be Delaware Bay with the Chesapeake Bay. Just making it very clear to everybody.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Seeing no opposition, I think that is the one we will choose. Katie, is there any more input you need from the Board on this task, this agenda item?

DR. DREW: No, I think that kind of spatial section was probably just the biggest. I guess we'll work on how you implement spatial reference points, and

that would probably be something that would need to go through the Peer Review Panel, in terms of our method of how do we allocate F.

How do we specify spatial reference points that are scientifically valid and supportive of the stock, but also meets management objectives. It sounds like there is still interest in that in developing specific regional reference points, and so we will go forward with that and work it out with the Peer Review Panel.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: This is in the interest of time, even though we're a little ahead of schedule, it usually doesn't end that way with striped bass.

DISCUSS WORK GROUP ON FUTURE STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: We'll move on to the next item, which is the Work Group on Future Striped Bass Management. Toni will be going over that.

MS. KERNS: In October of 2025, the Board took action to guide the development of a work group, after recognizing that the existing fishery management plan would need updating to address some long-term projection challenges, based on the continued low recruitment success for striped bass.

Declining recruitment in the Chesapeake Bay as well as the Hudson is the central concern driving this effort, in terms of what we want future management to look like in this fishery. The Work Group has been tasked with developing a white paper, to serve as the foundation for this future of striped bass management.

The Board has provided six core tasks for the Work Group. Several of these tasks are assessment related and a couple are not. A quick reminder, biological reference points and considering recruitment sensitive model-based approaches. Evaluating hatchery stocking as a

research and management tool with cost analysis.

Exploring whether other river systems beyond the Chesapeake Bay can contribute to the coastal stock in a significant way. Assessing drivers of recruitment success and failure across the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware and Hudson. Examining the reproductive contribution of large versus small female fish, and size-based management implications, and then developing methods to address the discard mortality in catch and release fisheries. The Board motion indicated participation by all sectors, scientists and managers, but it did not provide specifics of exactly how to put together that Work Group composition.

We had several different ideas that came about at the February meeting, and the Board acknowledged the challenge of keeping this Work Group at a manageable size by still having adequate representation from each sector and region, and noting the variety of viewpoints that come from those, and an adequate size thinking of at maximum 15 members, somewhere between 12 and 15.

There were suggestions for expanding the Work Group beyond the traditional sort of Board Work Group process where you just have Board members and then could pull some expertise from outside, but those individuals would just come in for specific meetings, and still the core group would be Board members.

We developed some options in the memo that was provided in meeting materials of how to expand that Work Group. Then in addition, some Board members suggested that we pull together a traditional core Work Group and then that input from Sub Groups on some of the specific tasks, and you can break up a task into different sections.

Then there was also a suggestion to start the Work Group process for some of the tasks and delay for some of the other ones until the assessment has been completed. In terms of options for the Work Group composition, and these are just some ideas, it doesn't represent all of the ideas that were put forward, as I said before just the core workgroup of

a Board Work Group, it only has Board members on that process.

A second option is to have sort of a mixture of work group, which would be Board members, Advisory Panel members, maybe up to 3, one per region and a couple of Technical Committee representatives. Then the last option was looking at either version of Option 1 or 2, but pulling in members of the public who are not a part of our committee process for this.

Then some of the questions that we need to think through today and provide guidance on is, will the Work Group seats be allocated by category to ensure diversity of the sector and the regional representation. Will they be structured nomination process for each of the state nominees to set a number of candidates, and how will the final participants be selected amongst the nominees.

Is it something that staff would work with the Chair on or is it something that the Board wants to vote on in the end. Then which option of composition that was in the previous slide you would want to do. Then thinking about how stakeholder engagement occurs with these work groups. If the Board did establish this core group and then have subgroups that are task specific.

We could bring in technical experts for some of those tasks, like thinking through the hatchery stocking task, you could bring in individuals that are doing more work on hatcheries that are outside of our normal Technical Committee or Advisory Panel process. There was an idea at the last meeting to bring forward facilitated workshops. These would be in depth sessions that focused on individual topics. This would require dedicated funding since it would require a facilitator, and there was a suggestion at the last meeting that they be regionally based. That would indicate more than one facilitated workshop.

Another way to bring in stakeholder engagement would be to do public surveys or webinars.

The surveys and webinars could be topic specific as well, or we could just do one and they could be either sent out the same to everybody or adjust the surveys or webinars slightly for regional based differences. It is possible that if we were to take some of these issues out and we were doing public hearings or webinars, that it could be duplicative with scoping if some of these issues came forward, so there is that consideration.

Then we also could just have dedicated public input time during each of the workgroup sessions or subgroup sessions. We generally do that when we can. Sometimes with work groups the time gets short pretty easily, and sometimes we do run out of time. But if it is something that the Board wants to dedicate every time then we could more structurally build that into the agendas for those meetings.

In terms of timelines and the specific tasks, as Katie mentioned before, the stock assessment Peer Review is scheduled for March. We hope that that Peer Review will get presented at the May meeting, but it is also based on the timeline of when we get the assessment report back that it might not be until the August meeting.

Several of the Work Group tasks are very much related to outcomes of the assessment, and it is staff's recommendation that those tasks not be addressed until the completion of the assessment. We do think that the non-assessment tasks that release mortality and the hatchery stock being tasked could be addressed sooner.

I think hatchery could be addressed at any point in time, and staff suggests that we wait until the completion of Massachusetts's project on release mortality is completed, which I think will be later this year, maybe sometime in the summer or early fall. For today we are seeking some prioritization of these task lists, so we can have clear deadlines and milestones for how we move forward.

PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON WORK GROUP COMPOSITION, TASK DETAILS, AND TIMELINE

Just sort of as a summary of what we're trying to do today is get direction on the Work Group composition. Do you want a core group, and then have subgroups, or how do you want that core group to look? Is it Option 1, 2 or 3 or some other way? Then how does that nomination process work and selection process?

Are there going to be specific seats to each different sector types or not? What is the best way to get in stakeholder engagement and then to just prioritize or get a timeline for the tasks. Is the Board in agreement with staff on waiting for the assessment tasks and starting these other two earlier, or do you just want to wait until everything is done and go forward? It's that kind of choice.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: I'll look to see if there are any questions before we kind of jump into feedback on these three tasks. When we get to that point maybe try to take them one at a time. But I'll first look for questions. See any questions? No, okay. I guess we'll try this, and if we have to skip around, so be it. We're looking for Board input on kind of the task prioritization and the timeline. Toni pointed out there are a couple items that could be addressed sooner rather than later, because they are not dependent on the stock assessment results.

We have a general idea when the assessment will be presented to the Board. The question for the Board is, when generally would you like the Work Group to get started? I'll look for input from any Board members. I have Shanna Madsen.

MS. MADSEN: I am going to, I know you said like maybe let's take this one at a time. I'm kind of thinking about this whole thing very holistically, and I want to give a big shout out to my other New England states for listening to my

ramblings and trying to collect my ideas, and kind of move us forward here.

Today as we kind of talked through the MSE for lobster, I think that kind of helped maybe clarify maybe a path forward here, because as I was reading this document and looking at the timelines, it seemed like it is getting very confusing as to how the assessment and some of these things were going to be done concurrently.

Essentially my suggestion is that we put together like we are doing for lobster a Steering Committee, and that committee should be small. That Steering Committee would then help us to decide what we would like to prioritize, as far as some of these assessment questions are concerned.

Obviously, I agree with the statement that everything that we have in here that is an assessment question should not be answered until after the assessment. But then having the release mortality, maybe a workgroup or a hatchery stocking workgroup. I think a Steering Committee could help us make decisions about these kinds of subgroups that might be useful.

On a whole I would like to see after the assessment, and this kind of ties into my questions and comments to Katie and Toni before. I would like to see us have essentially a Management Objectives Workshop for striped bass. For me, I'm kind of listening. I've been listening to folks around the table for a long time, and it seems like there are a lot of competing objectives here. We need to understand the balance between those and what those tradeoffs might be.

If we move through the assessment process like Katie is suggesting, we have the tools a.k.a. the models that kind of tell us what to do. Then from there we're developing BRPs based off of hopefully what comes out of a Management Objectives Workshop with facilitated workshops that kind of go through, same thing that we did for menhaden, same thing that we did for horseshoe crab. But we would not do that until 2027, when we've gathered all of the data from the assessment.

We have everything peer reviewed and we can kind of start moving forward from there. But in the meantime, I think that a Steering Committee could help us kind of further define who could be on some of these littler workgroups that work could get done on right now, meaning again the hatchery stocking and the release mortality. I think that that would be kind of a clear path forward, and maybe these timelines kind of converge a little bit better than they did before. That is my thought process.

MS. KERNS: Follow up question. How would you compose that Steering Committee? What is your idea for membership and how many?

MS. MADSEN: For me a Steering Committee, super small. I would say, I don't know 6 Board members. I wouldn't go any further beyond that, because I feel as though, well, maybe we could have a TC Chair or SAS Chair. But a Steering Committee is really just helping to determine the steps in the process, and then maybe help to further define who might be a part of each one of these processes as they develop.

I would kind of keep that one tight. Then when we're starting to think about this management strategy evaluation, that is where we're going to want to make sure that we're getting a wide swath of stakeholders, management, scientists, et cetera, so that we are kind of getting all of those management objectives out at once.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next up is Doug Grout.

MR. GROUT: I was originally just going to talk about task prioritization, start with that, then I'll give you my thoughts on the Working Group composition. I agree, as far as biological reference points instead of recruitment sensitive model-based approach, I agree that some stock assessments to work on and provide to us, that is something that we can put off until after the assessment to have.

Formerly review hatchery stocking. Yes, you could come up with a group that would look into that. But as I remember back when we were stocking heavily back in the '80s and '90s based on the tag returns. The stocked fish amounted to about 5% of the total biomass, or at least the total catch. I forget whether it was catch or total biomass.

Given the amount that had been put into how much stocking was going on back then, I'm not sure this is going to be something we might want to take up as a management document. But it might be good just to review the studies that were done, to find out, just to confirm these things. That to me could be a very simple thing that could be worked on almost immediately.

Evaluate potential for other river systems to contribute to the coastal stock. Outside of these three areas that are listed on here, Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay and Hudson River. The only other ones we were aware of in the past has been the Kennebec, and when was the last time, have you had any recruitment in the Kennebec, do you know? Below the average. Maybe something has happened since then. Is there any in the Merrimac?

I'm not sure we're going to get much out of that. We could address it but not much meat on the bone. As far as drivers of recruitment, a success or failure. Again, that is a stock assessment task so that will be after the stock assessment and exploring reproductive contributions to large and small female fish. It says in here that the TC and SAS could provide input after the assessment. That again, those are the three long term, and then of course the other thing we could be addressing in the near future could be the discard mortality and catch release in the fishery once the Mass DMF study is completed. The three that I think we could work on right now is discard mortality, potentially other rivers contributing to the stock in coastal systems, if we still think that is necessary, and then the review of the stocking data.

All the other things will be afterwards. Then my suggestion is for the work group composition. I believe having a combination of Board, AP, and

Technical Committee and staff on that working committee that working group, with the ability of that group to have public comment at some of these meetings, at the appropriate meetings.

If they find that something really needs to be dug into a little bit more, at that point see if the Steering Committee or the Working Group could have the ability to appoint small workgroups to work on it. But don't start off that we're going to have work groups working on this. Let's make sure we have the need for additional workgroups on it.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Yes, thanks, Doug. Toni has some follow ups on some of the comments so far.

MS. KERNS: I'll start with Doug's since that is fresh in my mind. For evaluating the potential for other river systems to contribute to the stock. One of things that I'm remembering because of my handy notes, is that the benchmark is going to include a review of recent genetic studies on spawning originations of striped bass so that could inform that. That won't be finished until the assessment, so that would make that harder to start now.

MR. GROUT: Yes, I agree with you. If that is part of the assessment then clearly that would have to wait until after the assessment.

DR. DREW: Let me read that.

MS. KERNS: I'll let Katie read that and we can come back to consider.

DR. DREW: I think it's not necessarily something we're doing specifically for the assessment, but there is work ongoing, genetic work. We're getting sort of a preprint of that to include in the assessment of evaluating the contributions of different genetic stocks, including the Kennebec/Merrimac and the Canadian stocks to catches in, I think it was about 2015 to 2016.

I don't think we have anything more recent. We do have obviously the recruitment indices from Maine that we could look into and compare that. I think it will be maybe we will just have some fresher information that won't be immediately available to the Work Group, but should be in publication soon. It's not necessarily specifically something that the assessment will do ourselves.

MR. GROUT: Okay, but it still would probably have to wait until after the assessment, because you're busy working on the assessment. Is that what you're saying?

DR. DREW: We're busy working on the assessment, and the team that is working on the specific paper. If that paper comes out before the assessment, we can share it with you guys, as well as, I think presumably, we could share the Maine Juvenile Index and see how it compares to other trends with you guys, if you wanted to look into that before the assessment.

MR. GROUT: If it's available, we can do it, but if not, again I think these are going to be minor things. Other questions?

MS. KERNS: Well, to you, Doug. Then I'm going to engage Bob for a second, and make sure he's listening to me. Back to Shanna. With a Management Objective Workshop that will require resources. We also have, it seems like we're moving down a pathway for management strategy evaluation for lobster, which also requires resources.

Two of which are resources of bundles of money that we typically do not just have laying around in the budget. I am just trying to make sure that if this is the path that the Board is going down that we can navigate that type of funding.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROBERT E. BEAL: Yes, I think for both of these that 2027 would be the earliest that we can pull these off, and we haven't set our 2027 budget. But I think a Management Objectives Workshop for striped bass is much less expensive, I

think, than a full MSE. If we go down the full MSE pathway that is a pretty heavy lift financially.

I think if this Board wants to go down the path of a workshop for management objectives, we can most likely, I don't want to over promise, but most likely find some funds for that in 2027. As with all budget issues, all the competing different budget things that have come across the Commission as we map out 2027 activities of the Commission, we'll have to decide what are the priorities.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Follow up, Shanna?

MS. MADSEN: Yes, I just wanted to clarify. My intention definitely was just a Management Objectives Workshop similar to what we did the EMO Workshop for menhaden, what we just did for horseshoe crab, not full MSE. I just wanted to, I guess, make clear with my comment that I definitely think that a work group in order to discuss management objectives is absolutely necessary for striped bass.

Again, hearing around the table a bunch of competing objectives et cetera. This is our flagship species, I really think that we should give it the time that it needs to have a good understanding, specifically of what our management objectives are now currently. That would happen again in 2027, after we've collected all of the data from the stock assessment, and kind of cleared out.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any other input from the Board on any of these items up here, as far as direction for this Work Group? Marty.

MR. MARTIN GARY: Not really anything to add to what has already been stated, but I just wanted to express my gratitude to Toni, Katie, all the staff at ASMFC and you as a Board Chair. In that moment back in October, we were faced with a somewhat cathartic moment, choice between a 12% reduction and status quo. Our delegation just didn't feel like either of those

choices were the right one. This is really difficult to get your arms around, as we've found out, and certainly wasn't our intention to have this keyed up in such complexity.

But I was confident that you know the principal reason for the Work Group is to move the needle of conversation to what do we want this fishery to look like when we hit 2034, 5, 6; when this poor recruitment manifests itself at its apex. It's going to be a really difficult time and I can tell you from living through the '80s like a bunch of others this table had been through.

Don't recommend previous methodology of handling that, even though people celebrated. I think the engagement with this resource; it is so special and important to people. It's really something we need to strive for and provide a lot of thought to. I think the Board is doing it today. I just really wanted to express my thanks to everybody.

The collective wisdom around this table and our community is extraordinary. I do have one thought for you all to think about, and I shared it with Chris and a couple others is. I think whoever is going to Chair this endeavor, it's really important to pick the right person, and fortunately we're blessed with a lot of experienced and knowledgeable people. I don't know whether it should be a sitting Board member. We have some other folks.

That is something we can settle at another time. But you know I just really appreciate the thought, because I feel comfortable now going from that moment in October when it was so uncertain to now. I feel like we're really moving this conversation in a way we can address what we're having with our assessment next year. I am thankful and I appreciate it.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Mike next. So far, we've heard some thoughts on kind of what we talked about in the past is the general makeup of the Work Group, a subset of Board members, AP members, TC, SAS representatives and possibly what Marty suggested for a Chair.

Looking to see if people generally like that concept or have some other ideas as far as the makeup of this. Also heard the idea of providing the public opportunities for giving their input during those meetings. There are some other options that were in the presentation. Just kind of look and see if we can get some concurrence on that, and with that I have Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: I just wanted to for the record state to you specifically, Chris, because you and I had a conversation a few days ago about this. At the time I was thinking that a subset of Advisory Panel members was going to be a really challenging thing to try to figure out who that subset of members was going to be.

But I also, in the discussion with you, I had thought that maybe this working group would evolve maybe to having more management type conversations about what are we going to do with the charterboat fisheries in the future or how are we going to better manage the commercial fisheries in the future? If that were the intent, I would say that we would be probably better off sticking with Work Group members that are Board members and then having interactions with the different groups like the AP, like the Technical Committee. But I wanted to clarify for the record, Chris and for you. That given the list of things that this working group is planning to have conversations about to start. I would say that I think it was Option 2 up there, which was a combination of all of the different, the Technical, the AP and the Board membership would be appropriate. I just wanted to clear that up for you.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Other hands. Joe Cimino then John Clark.

MR. JOE CIMINO: I think Action 2 was the combination, Mike, is that what you were saying? I think yes, I think I can support that. I think one thing I would like to see is to ensure that the AP membership is kind of updated or refreshed for some states I think we need to

look at that. There was a slide that had the numbers, I think on that.

It seemed very TC light. Those numbers were suggesting that there would only be like 2 TC members, but a total of like 12. I think it would be important to have some good TC representation is all I was saying there, Chris. I think one other thing I may have seen in a slide was a suggestion of a survey.

I think that is actually a really great way to get some public comment. You know I hate to see us going out to the public, having these huge meetings where people get 2 to 3 minutes to put all their thoughts together on this journey that Marty started us all on.

Some of that philosophical stuff, as far as what Marty was saying, like where do you want to see this go, I think can be done for the survey. It gives people some time to really consider it and put in what they are thinking. I would also encourage that maybe that is something that could be even developed through the working group.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: John Clark.

MR. CLARK: I was fortunate enough to attend all the Menhaden Work Group meetings for the Chesapeake Plan and then also went through the Horseshoe Crab Stakeholder Process. I think keeping it simple helps. I would prefer to see the core working group of Board members and then have public comment at the end of every session.

I thought that helped streamline things. I think when these things get kind of big and unwieldy and they just keep going on and on and on, that you know people just get kind of frustrated with the whole process and that they would also, what I've seen in both cases too is that minds don't really get changed by these processes of the public.

Just a good way to almost the public relations standpoint of this is also very important, just to let them know that we are listening. I think that doing something that is streamlined and fast would be the

best way to make people realize that we are taking this seriously. The Menhaden Work Group was Chairably by Marty Gary, so there is one more suggestion that he would be a great choice for that.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thanks, John, I was wondering when that was going to come up. I'm going to turn to Toni. We have a few similar but different options going on here, as far as the composition and timing. I just want to check with Toni, she's feverishly taking notes, I'm making sure I'm not missing hands. Just kind of see where we are here and what we need to do to give staff good guidance they need.

MS. KERNS: I've been trying to put up on the slide so that everybody sees in front of them the different ideas that are being brought forward. At this point now we have three separate ideas. The first was the one brought forward by Shanna, which I am going to simplify and say, to have a Steering Committee.

That Steering Committee makes a decision of when to prioritize the task, and it also includes a Management Objectives Workshop for 2027 after the assessment comes out, and that Steering Committee would be 6 Board members and maybe a TC or SAS type person, tight and small.

The second option, which I heard came from Marty, is to utilize a version of Option 2, which was spelled out in the document, which is I think probably somewhere up to 15 Board members with 3 AP members and 2 Technical Committee members. There was a possibility of adding maybe another Technical Committee member from Joe.

It is possible that that could utilize some subgroups to address some of the tasks if necessary, utilizing potentially surveys to get broader input. I don't know if Marty said that, but I think someone else did, so I don't know if that comes into play there or not. Then the

third option that I heard was just now from John Clark, and that was going with the simple method of just using Option 1, which is our traditional workgroup path.

This is a core work group of Board members and we do public comment, I think for both Option 2 and 1 would utilize a structured public comment at the end of each meeting, but making sure that that time is always there and not if we have time. I think we need some, sort of narrow this down.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Pretty easy. Yes, thoughts on those three options. Shanna.

MS. MADSEN: I think the first option, and Marty's option are basically the same, at least the way that I was kind of suggesting it. The Steering Committee only exists so that they can kind of put together these subgroups that can address these tasks. Mainly the hatchery and release mortality, so the Steering Committee only exists to kind of put those groups together.

Then Marty saying like the larger Work Group, you know we can get some surveys, get some broader stakeholder input. I think that is totally perfect for a Management Objectives Workshop also. We could do that preliminarily, get some stakeholder input. But I also want to make sure that stakeholders are part of that Management Objective Workshop more broadly.

I love the idea of using surveys to kind of get more public input, but utilizing obviously this workgroup method, have a more refined group of stakeholders that can give us some input on management objectives.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Other thoughts. Dennis Abbott.

MR. DENNIS ABBOTT: Yes, regarding surveys. My thought is that you would have to compose a survey. How many people are going to be involved in the survey? When are you going to do the survey? I think at the point we're at I think we shouldn't be looking at surveys very hard as we go

along with what Shanna recommended. I'm just not comfortable getting into surveys right at this point in time.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Yes, Toni, to that point.

MS. KERNS: I do think that we have some CESS members that are happy to help out with some of our striped bass work, and there is some expertise in developing surveys. I think if there are some specific concepts that the Board is trying to gather from your broader public, a survey can get you there outside of our traditional process.

Where you may not see such a wide variety of individuals showing up to public hearings, but you may get more well-rounded input that you may not get otherwise. That we can utilize some experts in developing those surveys if we need to. They have reached out to say that they are willing to help out. It doesn't have to be for everything, but maybe a couple things.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Mike.

MR. LUISI: If it helps, sitting here thinking about it more. I like the idea that is put before us here at the top of this page we're all looking at. I would be inclined to withdraw the Option 2 if it just helps simplify things. I think as it has been discussed the Steering Committee idea.

Tackling some issues one at a time until we get to the point where we have a new assessment and we really need to put our where the rubber hits the road and we get down into management and other things like that. If it helps with this, Toni, if it helps just eliminate Option 2 as I suggested, you can just get rid of that idea.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Okay, I look for other input on that. Nichola.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: The thing I was going to raise with Option 2 as it is labeled up there is the difficulty of maybe just picking 3 Advisory

Panel members. Unless they let the AP members choose those 3 themselves then I think we might struggle on that. Thinking about it more as like a Steering Committee that is going to define which process we're using for each task and the timeline for those.

I think a little bit smaller is probably better. I think you want to make sure that you do have some Technical Committee or SAS input to that discussion of a timeline to make sure we're getting it right still. Dr. Drew I'm sure can help keep us on the right track, I think the TC and SAS are I know a part of it as well. Just in terms of the priority of things here.

I do think that there are biological reference points and the management objectives are kind of the number one priority on this list for me, and making sure that that is a process that has good public input is important. One thing that is nice about surveys is that you can get a lot broader input than you can from just a workshop, Management Objectives Workshop. We would be inviting a smaller number of people to that, so maybe that is just a discussion that the Steering Group can continue to have about what is the best approach to get at public input at the management objectives to move forward. If it is a workshop, I am a little hesitant about a regional workshop. I think there is benefits to having the management unit in the room to view each other and how those objectives may differ by region.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Is there any objection to removing Option 2 from the composition of the Work Group? Seeing none; we're definitely narrowing down the composition, which is great. Any other thoughts, and Toni, I'll turn to you. Any other input we need to kind of firm up the guidance that staff needs to move this along?

MS. KERNS: We do still have John's Option 1 of a simplified work group, kind of the way we've worked on things in the past over this perception, and I apologize, John, that I don't have more words here. It's Toni at the end. We do have two paths here, so we need to decide which path we want to go down, and then once we decide which path we

want to go down, I just need to determine how we are going to nominate and put people on either the Steering Committee or the Core Work Group.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thoughts on that, John.

MR. CLARK: Just briefly. I mean I just want to keep things simple, just because we're the managers, ultimately, it's going to come to the Board to decide. I think as Board members we already hear from the public all the time. I think as I said, that Menhaden Work Group was very effective by having a public comment period at the end of each meeting.

But we're not doing a focus group for a new protein bar here, this is management that everybody knows what they think about striped bass already. The point is to just kind of focus where we're going forward with this. That is why once again, I think keeping it simple is the way to go.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: I saw Doug's hand. Doug.

MR. GROUT: My suggestion, because both of these deal with essentially 6 Board members or just a core working group, that maybe we look at what was the selected, the recommendation in Item 2, Option 2, for the 6 Board members, and that is the Board Chair plus one from Chesapeake Bay, state, their jurisdiction, Delaware Bay jurisdiction, Hudson River jurisdiction, Southern New England and Northern New England. That would make up the 6 Core Working Group or Steering Committee, whatever is the pleasure of this Board.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: I think that is what we need to hone in on is I guess the Steering Committee or the Core Work Group. I'm looking at Toni, just to kind of make sure I'm getting this right, as far as what the Board needs to kind of fix so we don't have competing things. There are a lot of similarities but just

make sure we're not having competing ideas here.

MS. KERNS: We definitely have two competing ideas, so if we can't agree then we can just get a motion on the table.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Shanna.

MS. MADSEN: I just want to say what Doug is proposing is perfect for either Option 1 just Core Work Group or Steering Committee. The only thing I'm also thinking about when I'm thinking about my Steering Committee idea is I think I would like one member.

Probably the AP Chair, because again, that Steering Committee is going to help dictate who is going to be on the larger Management Objectives Workshops. I would like to see that person be a part of this process as we kind of build it out as well. Just one more in there, sorry. I know I was keeping it tight, but just that extra.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Toni, I guess we're kind of at a point where we need to make a decision here.

MS. KERNS: Are you going to need a motion or someone needs to.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Shanna.

MS. MADSEN: I'm essentially going to read what I've got up there. Move to use a Steering Committee to task out to several groups the various issues that we have within this document, followed up by the stock assessment, followed up by a Management Objectives Workshop for striped bass in 2027. The Steering Committee would help to dictate that process the whole time. Does that make sense?

MS. KERNS: That makes sense, Shanna, but can you just say Move to use the Steering Committee process and we'll make sure that all of those other pieces are included.

MS. MADSEN: Sounds great. **Move to use a Steering Committee process.**

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Concise motion by Shana Madsen, looking for a second, Dave Sikorski. Further discussion on the motion. Shanna, I guess you gave some context, do you have any other thoughts on that?

MS. MADSEN: Just really quick. I guess I would say the reason why I'm looking for this a bit more complicated process is because I think it's a really complicated topic. When I went through the Management Objectives Workshop for menhaden, I think that the tradeoffs between all of the various management objectives need to be on the table and discussed in that room, in order to be able to understand specifically what we are and aren't giving up here.

I just think with our flagship species, again, it just really deserves the same time that we've given other species. I guess I would say ERPs are the result of that EMO Workshop. I think we should attempt this for striped bass as well.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: As the seconder, Dave, no comment? Okay, further discussion on the motion? Yes, Rob LaFrance.

MR. ROB LaFRANCE: Having worked on a couple of these working groups, I really like folks' ideas of regional appointments. I don't know whether we just have to leave it at that, but I just want to go on record as saying I think that was a good idea that we should consider. I don't know if it needs to be part of the motion, I wanted to make that comment.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Yes, that is great even if it doesn't get part of the motion. Any other thoughts on this before I call the question? I was going to see if there was any objection, but I'll just quickly check. Does anybody need time to caucus first? Question, David Borden.

MR. DAVID V.D. BORDEN: I'll make this brief. If we're going to do a Steering Committee, shouldn't we have some discussion about how we're going to pick those individuals? I don't

think the staff wants to be put in the role of picking the individuals. I have a suggestion if Toni doesn't have a suggestion.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Yes, I mean we could talk about that quickly now or vote on this motion and touch on that detail, because yes, that is an important one. Are you okay on calling the question then discussing that?

MR. BORDEN: Yes, we can talk about it next.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Is there any objection to the motion up on the board? Seeing none, got a question, Roy Miller.

MR. MILLER: Excuse me, Mr. Chair. I just want to make sure I understand. We've discussed this back and forth and I no longer am certain I know who would be on the Steering Committee. Was it the suggestion of one from each producer area and one from New England, that suggestion? I think it was Doug that brought it up. Is that what we're following?

MS. KERNS: The suggestion was, and I haven't heard opposition yet, but I was going to just confirm that is that we go with that. That would be six Board members, so the Chair plus a person from the Chesapeake, the Delaware, the Hudson, Southern New England and Northern New England. There would be a TC/SAS representative that could be the Chair or could be somebody else, and the AP Chair. Those would be the Steering Committee.

MR. MILLER: Thank you.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Shanna.

MS. MADSEN: Just wondering if we should put that in the motion at this point. It seems like people are kind of confused.

MS. KERNS: We'll do that, it just will take us time. The Board can nod if you need it up on the motion, or if it is reflected in the record and everybody understands then we do not need to write it up there. The Board can nod if you need it up on the

motion, or if it's reflected in the record and everybody understands, then we do not need to write it up there.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Does the Board understand the makeup? Okay, so we'll keep the motion the way it is. Just to double check, **is there any objection to the motion? Okay, seeing none;** back to David Borden's question about who is on the hook to pick the Steering Committee. David, I don't know if you had anything else to add.

MR. BORDEN: The list that Toni just read is where in the document, Toni?

MS. KERNS: It is listed under Number 2 of the Work Group composition; it's on Page 2. It is Board Chair plus one from each spawning region, Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, Hudson River, Southern New England and Northern New England. In the past when we have put together work groups, we have solicited nominations from the Board.

We could do that by region, I guess, or anybody could nominate someone for these areas, and then we would have the Chair finalize that work group, that is what we have done in the past. We can do that for this, or if there is some other way that the Board would like to establish that Steering Committee, let us know.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Follow up, David.

MR. BORDEN: Personally, I would prefer it if it was equal numbers from the producer states and equal numbers from the coastal states. The way that language is written, Toni, I'm not looking at, is it 4 and 2? Is that what the composition would be?

MS. KERNS: It's 1 person from the Chesapeake, 1 person from the Delaware, 1 person from New York/Hudson, 1 person from Southern New England and 1 person from Northern New England.

MR. BORDEN: Okay, so we end up with 3 producer states and 2 coastal states.

MS. KERNS: Plus, the Board Chair, who is a coastal state.

MR. BORDEN: I guess my only point would be, I would prefer if it was 3 and 3. It would be fine with me if the producer states selected their 3 candidates and the coastal states caucused and selected their 3 candidates.

MS. KERNS: That would be 7 Board members.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Dave Sikorski.

MR. DAVID SIKORSKI: I can understand the concern, but I think the whole point of the Steering Committee is to get us to the point where we have the Work Group that can be more broadly representative of everybody's interest. Also, coming from a producer area, we also have a coast, so we have coastal fisheries, bait fishers et cetera. For the Steering Committee, I would prefer we keep it simple, and what Toni just listed off is sufficient for me.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Okay, any other thoughts on kind of the original idea of the Steering Committee composition, is everyone okay with that? If there is kind of strong ideas as far as changing that composition, probably should do it through a motion. If not, we'll go with what we were originally discussing. Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: Just a question as to whether the Steering Committee meetings would be open to other Board members to listen in and chime in if they feel like something is missing out.

MS. KERNS: I think yes, generally speaking every Commission meeting is open to the public, unless we're discussing confidential data.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Joe Grist.

MR. GRIST: Either way we're going here, we are going to take a look at the APs, right, at the AP

locals. Long day for all of us, but we're going to look at that, because I think Joe Cimino said earlier, we really need to be going to dive in on the AP and getting it repopulated correctly.

MS. KERNS: The Steering Committee would only have the AP Chair, and we can dive into evaluating what the AP composition should be, as we move along between now and when we get to the Management Objectives Workshop.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Okay, just looking around the table. Anything else on this. Toni, is there anything else you need from the Board on this task?

MS. KERNS: No.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Thanks, I appreciate that. If I didn't note the **motion passed with no objection**. It might have got lost in the shuffle, but yes, that is what we're going with. Easy to lose track, sorry about that.

UPDATE ON ADDENDUM III IMPLEMENTATION FOR MARYLAND SEASON

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Well, next on the agenda is an Update on Addendum III implementation for the Maryland Season. I'll look to, or maybe I'll see who wants to cover that.

MS. KERNS: I might be able to get it done real fast for you, if that is helpful, Mike. There are two things I need to report on here. The first was that Maryland did in fact implement the season that was in their implementation plan and they are moving forward with that. We put this on the agenda, just in case there was a change and there is not, so moving forward.

I also wanted to note that Potomac River Fisheries Commission in evaluating their total length definition, actually already had that definition within their current regulations, so they are no longer putting in place what they had proposed in their implementation plan, because what was in their definition already

was sufficient. Letting the Board know about that, that wasn't in the agenda.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any questions on that? Moving along.

DISCUSS TIMELINE AND PROCESS TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE NOAA FISHERIES STRIPED BASS AQUACULTURE

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next item is Discuss a Timeline and Process to Provide Feedback on NOAA Fisheries Striped Bass Aquaculture Plan. We've got an update, a presentation on this at the last meeting, and you'll probably notice, those in the room, that the tables are a little more populated than most striped bass meetings. We have Board members from South Carolina and Florida not on the Striped Bass Board. However, some of the options offered in that plan could be possibly down there into the coast. Just welcoming them as they show up early, and I probably won't be seeing them again at another Striped Bass Board meeting, but you're always welcome if you want to. With that, Toni, I'll turn it over to you.

MS. KERNS: I am not going to re go over the entire Technical Memo that was presented at the last Board meeting. But NOAA did present their technical memo on offshore striped bass aquaculture at our last meeting. Striped bass has been prohibited from being harvested in the EEZ since 1990.

Their technical memorandum looks at advances in science, engineering, genetics, disease management, regulatory frameworks that could make the offshore for pure strain striped bass aquaculture both feasible and manageable, provided a carefully designed regulatory carve out is done.

NOAA is seeking the Board's feedback on our position regarding the memo. We did not really provide a ton of comments back to NOAA at the last Board meeting, and we don't have time on the agenda today to get all of the comments that I think

this Board and the southern states may want to provide.

I just want to point out a couple of areas where I think that the Board may want to go back and reread the memo and focus potential comments on. These were areas that I saw that I thought that I thought you all, based on conversations that have been had in the past that you may want to talk about.

Then I'll provide a timeline for receiving those comments. In terms of economic analysis, the Board did request an economic analysis from NOAA. I'm not sure at this time they are prepared to do an economic analysis, unless they know they are going to be moving forward with some sort of plan.

But the report doesn't have any published U.S. production costs and economic analysis that they do have in there relies on cost estimates that have been extrapolated from other species like red drum, greater amberjack and salmon operations. But we don't have any actual cost study for striped bass.

There is also not market impact analysis. The report explicitly states that the impact of farmed striped bass on wild caught and import markets would require further analysis. They do acknowledge that one might need to be done. It is an omission that I think this Board has said that they do want to see.

The report talks about using sterilization technologies, in order to make sure that the populations that are in the net pens aren't breeding with the wild fish, but the report also states that the technologies have not been tested. It is something that you may want to look at and think about as you're sending your comments. If those technologies haven't been tested then what types of risk does that put on the wild stock with possible escapement?

The report looks at thermal modeling, but it only uses data from 2020 to 2023, so four years of ocean temperature data is a pretty short baseline for a long-term sighting decision, especially given our known uncertainty with climate. A spatial analysis would benefit from a longer timeframe, especially when those sighting areas are mostly off of our southern states.

The two most prime sightings that it had suggested were off of North Carolina, as well as off of Florida. Some of the disease therapy information that is being suggested, in terms of what would be put into the water has not been tested by the FDA in marine striped bass, so that might be something that the Board would be interested in looking at.

Then lastly is looking at habitat and protected species. For some of the areas that are being suggested for sighting, it is critical right whale habitat that overlaps along the Atlantic Coast, so offshore permitting processes may face a lot of scrutiny under Section 7 consultations, as well as containment risks. It does suggest using an entanglement risk framework, but to my knowledge using a 3D entanglement simulator, but to my knowledge that simulator has not actually been used before. It has not been brought forward to the TRT, so I am not aware of what that simulator would be, so just an untested product.

Those were some of the things that I saw, but there may be additional things in there that are either things that raise concerns for you, or things that you like from the report. What we are suggesting is that the Board provide very specific comments to staff by mid-June. I'll follow up with an e-mail with the report, as well as deadlines for you all to get information back to us.

We would take all of the information that you've given us and draft a letter for the Board to review, and we would invite the southern states again, if they wanted to participate during that timeframe. Anything that this Board would approve for a letter moving forward back to NOAA, would also go to the Policy Board in August for final approval, and then

we would send that letter off to NOAA Fisheries in early August. I can take questions.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Questions for Toni. Roy Miller.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chair, I was just talking a little bit with John. I read the Aquaculture Proposal, and I know they have a dedicated brood stock. But remembering in the past, when I was working for a state agency, we had to decide whether to issue collecting permits to allow capture of wild caught striped bass to be used for aquaculture purposes. I just would like to express concerns with that, should a proposal of that nature come up again. It caused problems before, and I can anticipate it causing problems in the future, if it ever comes up again.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any other questions or thoughts regarding this? Kind of see the timeline. Erika.

MS. ERIKA BURGESS: Thank you for the invitation to sit in on this conversation. A couple points that I did not see in the list that Toni put together that I just want to share for the Board while we're all here is, the document that was provided to us is very brief on conflicts with other ocean users. In an area off of Northeast Florida where they said there are potential sights, we've got shrimpers operating in the ocean, as well as commercial vessel traffic in shipping lanes. We would like to see that taken into consideration with sightings. The other thing that was not mentioned was the potential impact for storms. That area is very often impacted by hurricanes and we would want any infrastructure that was to go out there to be durable and able to persist past those storms.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Toni.

MS. KERNS: Thank you, Erika, and I'll note that Danielle did address in her presentation the conflicts with other user groups and I'm trying

to remember. She said that NOAA is well versed in that, dealing with conflict in other user groups. I have that written down, but if you have any concerns with the way conflicts with other user groups have been processed in the past, that maybe we should try to use some of those as examples. If there has been successes or failures in dealing with conflict, we can work together to help develop those comments.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any other thoughts? Yes, Ben Dyar.

MR. BEN DYAR: I appreciate you all having the time for us today as well. I apologize for this question if it's already been answered or directed. But how does this fit in with like, in other regions as in the Gulf and Southern California, where NOAA's extensive work with aquaculture opportunity areas and aquaculture atlases, and deriving all this information and going through these vetting processes of where these sighting locations are. How does that differ from that process, and where does that fit in?

MS. KERNS: I can take that question back to NOAA, Ben, but I don't know, Max is turning his head, he's not sure. I'm not sure, but I can ask of that and then get back to you.

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Any other thoughts, questions on this? Seeing none; so yes, Toni will follow up with an e-mail asking Board members for comments. You see the timeline where this will be considered, again in August. Thanks for all that.

ELECT VICE CHAIR

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Next item is to elect a Vice-Chair, so I'll be looking for a motion. Megan.

MS. WARE: **It would be my pleasure to nominate Nichola Meserve.**

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: Second by John Clark. Any discussion on the motion, **any objection to the motion? Motion passes**, congratulations, Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: No entertaining early retirement, Chris.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR BATSAVAGE: On to the last item, Other Business. Is there any other business before the Board? Seeing none; if there is no objection this Board is adjourned. Thanks, everyone.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m. on Monday, May 4, 2026)