PROCEEDINGS OF THE

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting

May 6, 2026
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1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).

2. **Approval of Proceedings of October 2025** by consent (Page 1).

3. **Move to approve South Carolina and Georgia's range of options in their respective red drum management proposals to implement Addendum II** (Page 3). Motion by Spud Woodward; second by Malcolm Rhodes. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 3).

4. **Move to approve North Carolina's conservation equivalency proposal for its spot commercial season** (Page 5). Motion by Chris Batsavage; second by Ethan Simpson. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 6).

5. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 20).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Adam Nowalksy, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Richard Wong, DE, proxy for J. Clark (AA)
Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Carrie Kennedy, MD, proxy for K. Charbonneau (AA)
Russell Dize, MD (GA)
David Sikorski, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Ethan Simpson, VA, proxy for J. Grist (Acting AA)
Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for K. Rawls (AA)
Ben Dyar, SC, proxy for K. Keppler (AA)
Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Chris McDonough, SC, proxy for Sen. Cromer (LA)
Doug Haymans, GA (AA)
Spud Woodward, GA (GA)
Erika Burgess, FL, proxy for J. McCawley (AA)
Gary Jennings, FL (GA)
Ron Owens, PRFC

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

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

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

The Sciaenids 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; Wednesday, May 6, 2026, and was called to order at 9:15 a.m. by Chair Ben Dyar.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR BEN DYAR: Good morning; we'll start the Call to Order. All right, I guess we'll get started. My name is Ben Dyar; I am the Administrative Proxy for South Carolina. We have Ms. Bauer here, the fisheries Coordinator. We also have giving presentations is C.J. Schlick and Pat Campfield. I believe we have some folks online as well.

MS. TRACEY BAUER: Yes, for Commissioners online it is Adam Nowalsky and Dave Sikorski.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR DYAR: A lot of stuff to do today, see if we can get through it. We have the morning. Any amendments or changes to the agenda?

MR. CHRIS BATSAVAGE: If there is time, this should be short, during Other Business I just wanted to give the Board a quick update on the latest spotted sea trout cold stun event in North Carolina.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR DYAR: Great, thanks, Chris. Noted. Any changes to the proceedings from October of 2025? Not seeing that's consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR DYAR: Moving on to public comment. Does anyone in the room or online have any public comments that are not on the agenda today? Seeing none online. Erika Burgess.

MS. ERIKA BURGESS: Sorry, I was filling my coffee and missed the opportunity. Could I also be added on the agenda, just an update for sea trout regulation changes in Florida?

MR. DYAR: Yes, we'll note that. Moving along.

CONSIDER GEORGIA AND SOUTH CAROLINA RED DRUM MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS TO IMPLEMENT ADDENDUM II

MR. DYAR: First on the agenda item we have Consider Georgia and South Carolina Red Drum Management Proposals to Implement Addendum II. This is going to be a final action, and we'll have review of the proposals by Tracey Bauer.

MS. BAUER: For this agenda item I will briefly go over some background information before we lead into a high-level summary of South Carolina and Georgia's proposals, including the potential estimated stockwide minimum and maximum reductions, depending on which options are chosen. The Board action for consideration today is approval of the range of options in South Carolina and Georgia's proposals. First, I wanted to start off with a reminder of red drum Addendum IIs implementation timeline, which was set when the Board approved Addendum II this past October. Following today's consideration of approval of the proposals that Georgia and South Carolina have submitted, Georgia and South Carolina will need to choose one option to implement by September 1, 2026.

REVIEW PROPOSALS

MS. BAUER: Within Addendum II itself, the guidelines provided for these proposals, in short, the management measures in both southern stock proposals should aim to achieve the threshold and end overfishing at 30% SPR. Then the ultimate target is decreasing fishing mortality, such that it is less than the fishing mortality associated with 40% SPR under terminal year fishery selectivity patterns.

Ultimately what that equals to is a 14.4% reduction is needed to meet that, to achieve the threshold and end overfishing. Starting off here with South Carolina's proposal. I'm going to go first through the methodology in that proposal and then move into what options are in the proposal itself.

To estimate the reduction achieved by changes to the red drum regulations, South Carolina used the approved methodology that was developed by the

Technical Committee and SAS, and presented to the Board last May. In addition to that, South Carolina used a supplementary analysis to that analysis that was presented to the Board last May, where they wanted to look at estimating the impact of an increased maximum size limit on catch, because they wanted to explore adjustments to their slot.

To evaluate increasing that upper slot limit above 23 inches total length, South Carolina estimated the reduction achieved from lowering the slot limit to 22 inches or 21 inches total length, and then subtracted those amounts when modeling increases to 24 inches or 25 inches total length.

South Carolina's options are, there are six options in total that they are putting forward, with estimated percent reductions in catch ranging from 25.6 to 28.86%. All options increase the minimum size limit to between 17 and 19 inches, and all options but one increase the maximum size limit to 25 inches. Three of the options decrease the bag limit to 1 fish and a majority of the options decrease the vessel limit from 6 to 2 or 4 fish.

Moving right along to Georgia's proposal, and we can always go back to any of the options if anyone wants to look at them again. Similarly, Georgia's methodology used that analysis to estimate catch reductions that the TC developed earlier last year. Then they also developed their own supplementary methodology to also look at estimating the impact of an increased maximum size limit on catch.

Georgia was able to gauge changes in catch by comparing the proportions of red drum in each of the size bins from the most recent five-year period, with a current slot to data from a five-year period when the upper slot of the slot limit was higher. The TC when reviewing both of these proposals from South Carolina and Georgia, did you notice they do two different ways to accomplish the same thing. The TC have noted that it would be difficult for South Carolina to use historical data like Georgia has for their supplementary analysis, since South Carolina had changed both of their minimum and maximum sizes in 2007. In contrast, Georgia previously only increased their maximum size.

Again, two analysis that are accomplishing the same thing, and the TC recommended both. For Georgia's options, Georgia has five main options in the proposal. But also, all consider the addition of a vessel limit in conjunctions with those five main options.

Estimated percent reductions range from 22.5% to 36.5% if we're just focusing on the five main options. Bag limits are between 2 fish and 4 fish that are under consideration, and minimum size limits between 14 and 16 inches. Total length is under consideration as well. In addition, the maximum size limits that they're looking at in the options are between 23- and 25-inches total length.

Moving on to the estimated stock-wide reduction achieved, obviously I can't calculate the estimated reductions used by all the different combinations of the options, so I went with the options that provided the smallest reduction and the options that provided the largest reduction to look at the minimum and maximum reductions that could be achieved by everything that team put forward here, to give you that range of what's the lowest possible and the highest possible.

The lowest possible reduction achieved is 19.6 %, and this is using with Florida there that is the regulations that were put into place in 2022 being accounted for, for their reduction. Here is the maximum reduction achieved that is possible. The reduction range is between 19.6% and 24.2% reduction possible, based on the options that South Carolina and Georgia have put forward.

This means that both proposals meet the reduction in catch needed to achieve the 30%SPR threshold that 14.4% reduction. Finally, I just threw this in here. This is looking at, in South Carolina's proposal they said that they were putting forward, at least the legislature was considering Option 3.

With Option 3 and Georgia's lowest possible reduction, the option that achieves the lowest possible reduction, that is at 20.7%. That is all of the information from the proposals, other than implementation timelines in a proposal, which both

said they would be able to implement by that goal of September 1st.

CONSIDER FINAL APPROVAL OF MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

MS. BAUER: With that, the Board action for consideration today is considering approval of the range of options in both proposals, and I would be happy to take any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Any questions? Seeing no questions, do we want to make a motion? Let's see if we can do this actually with consent. Does anybody object? We need to make a motion first. We have a draft motion. Spud.

MR. SPUD WOODWARD: I **move to approve South Carolina and Georgia's range of options in their respective red drum management proposals to implement Addendum II.**

CHAIR DYAR: I have Malcolm as a second. Spud, would you like to speak to the motion?

MR. WOODWARD: I don't think I can add a whole lot, other than a lot has gone into this, and I think we're moving the ball down the field the way we need to proportionately. I think this is a responsible response to what we've seen in the assessment, so I'm certainly satisfied that we're doing what we need to do to address the red drum situation.

CHAIR DYAR: Thank you, Malcolm.

DR. MALCOLM RHODES: Yes, I second it. When we had the public sessions we had huge widespread support for this option, which was the most stringent option it has, and the Chairman can talk about this more. But it has passed the Senate, we're legislatively mandated so it is passed the Senate.

It passed the House, but they added a deer regulation on top of the red drum, so now it has scheduled a joint session to get ironed out to be passed, to be made law. We should be done by September, but I'm just throwing out the fact that we're dealing with legislature and this has been passed by both with a plus by the House. We're working on it.

CHAIR DYAR: Thanks, Malcolm, it did go through the House Committee yesterday, so now it has to go to the floor and get two readings within the next nine days, which is doable. But as you know, I don't have full control over that process, but they are well aware of the Commission and the requirements, and the need to see this through. We're very hopeful that that will continue to happen. Our session ends 14th of May, but if they have to go to Conference Committee, they can do that, and definitely meet that deadline of September 1. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just as a refresher, we can make the necessary changes to our Board of Natural Resources, and it's in queue for them to be briefed this month on it, and then there is a requirement for 30 days. We definitely should have this in place by the required deadline.

CHAIR DYAR: Any other discussion? Seeing none; **is there any opposition to the motion? I see none; passes by consent.**

CONSIDER NORTH CAROLINA SPOT CONSERVATION EQUIVALENCY PROPOSAL

CHAIR DYAR: Moving on to next agenda item, Consider North Carolina Spot Conservation Equivalency Proposal, again this is a final action. We'll hear a proposal by Chris Batsavage and then Tracey Bauer will give us the report from the PRT and the AP.

REVIEW OF NORTH CAROLINA PROPOSAL

MR. BATSAVAGE: The 2020 Traffic Light Analysis for spot triggered at the 30% threshold, requiring management as outlined in Addendum III. The management response for non-*de minimis* states was a 50-fish bag limit for the recreational fishery and states must reduce commercial harvest by 1% of the average state commercial harvest from the previous 10-years.

North Carolina implemented the 50-fish bag limit back in April of 2021, and the commercial spot fishery has closed from December 10 through April 4 every year beginning in 2021 to meet the required 1% reduction. North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries proposes moving the current annual closure period for the commercial spot fishery to January 1 through April 28.

This option maintains a 16-week closure, and is projected to achieve an annual reduction in harvest of 6,940 pounds, exceeding both the 1% harvest reduction required by Addendum III and the projected reduction for the current closure period. The Division considered alternative season closure options that would achieve the required harvest reduction. However, these options did not minimize regulatory discards, impacts to the fishery or preferentially protect the spawning stock to the extent achieved by the options that were presented. The Division explored alternative closure options for the commercial spot fishery after receiving comments from commercial fishermen in the ocean gillnet fishery along the southern part of the coast, except the fall migration of spot now starts later and extends progressively later into the year, which disproportionately impacts their access to the spot fishery compared to fishermen in other parts of the state.

There was also concern that regulatory discards of spot following the closure date in mid-December may have increased into the ocean gillnet fisheries targeting other species such as kingfish. Feedback from fishermen suggested that a closure period beginning on January 1st, may reduce the regulatory discards of spot in that ocean gillnet fishery targeting kingfish.

Fishermen in other parts of the state however, were not as concerned about moving the closure period, because spot are no longer available to them by the time the fishery closes. The January 1 to April 28 closed season was projected to achieve a greater landings reduction than the current closure period, provides some protection of adult fish during their spawning migration, and minimizes regulatory discards.

This option also allows access to the fishery when the fish are largest and most valuable, and the closure period is similar enough to the current closure that implementation and enforcement should be straightforward. The ten-year period from 2010 to 2019 was used to calculate the current 1% reduction in commercial harvest.

But the 2015 to 2019 time period was used to determine the closure dates, because those years are more reflective of catches and fisheries characteristics. However, landings exceeded the 10-year average from 2010 to 2019 in each year from 2020 through 2023.

Because of this, the 5-year period from 2019 to 2023 was used to create options for alternative closure periods projected to achieve that required 1% reduction in landings, based on current trends of the fishery, using the same methods required to determine the closure options. The more conservative closure options of January 1 through April 28 are appropriate, given that the commercial landings for spot have increased since 2019. That concludes the presentation of our CE proposal. I would be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Do you want to take questions before moving on? Any questions specific to Chris's proposal? Seeing none.

PLAN REVIEW TEAM AND ADVISORY PANEL REPORT

CHAIR DYAR: Tracey, do you want to go ahead and give the AP Report and PRT.

MS. BAUER: I will be going through some information on the review of North Carolina CE proposal. Just as a reminder, the Commission's CE Guidance Document outlines the process that CE proposals must go through to be approved. After a state submits a proposal, it is reviewed by the PRT to ensure the proposal contains all the necessary components, and meets the standards within the species FMP.

The PRT also recommends any other committees that the PRT believes would be appropriate to review the proposal. These comments are all compiled and presented to the Advisory Panel, which reviews everything and provides their own comments. All of this information has been presented to the Board for their consideration. First the spot PRT reviewed the proposal, and agreed that it included all the required information outlined in the Commission's CE Guidance Document, which includes the rationale description of how the conservation equivalency program meets the standards within the FMP, the review schedule and the monitoring and reporting process.

The PRT also agreed the proposal demonstrated equivalency and did not deviate from the standards within the spot FMP. Lastly, the PRT noted in particular, that North Carolina's proposed closed season exceeds both the required 1% harvest reduction and the reduction achieved by the current closure period.
The South Atlantic Advisory Panel met on April 15 to review the proposal, and did not express any major concerns regarding it. One AP member was interested in any available data in April, noting that spot had been showing up earlier in the month in recent years, and he was just a little concerned about moving the last day of the closure from April 4 to April 28.

It could potentially lead to an increase in regulatory discards in that period. Another AP member expressed strong support for the proposal, due to the benefits to the commercial fishermen in the southern part of North Carolina and how it was projected to reduce regulatory discards in December.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF NORTH CAROLINA'S CONSERVATION EQUIVALENCY PROPOSAL

MS. BAUER: Just as a note, I wanted to mention the proposal was sent to the Spot TC through e-mail to give them a heads up in the situation and they did not express any concerns. The proposal was also reviewed via e-mail by Law Enforcement Committee representatives who also have no concerns. The Board action for consideration today is Consider Approval of North Carolina's CE proposal for its spot commercial season.

CHAIR DYAR: Any questions? Seeing none does anyone want to make a motion? Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, **move to approve North Carolina's conservation equivalency proposal for its spot commercial season.**

CHAIR DYAR: Second, Ethan. Chris, do you have any comments on the motion?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, just appreciate the staff and the fishermen who reached out to us about this in the first place, and then you had to kind of work through the different options. I think with changing ocean conditions, ocean is staying warmer longer. What we put in place initially made sense, but it clearly isn't working now. I think when it comes to any seasons like this for any species, I think we definitely try to hit a moving target. Hopefully this works, we'll certainly be evaluating it after it is implemented.

CHAIR DYAR: Ethan any follow up?

MR. ETHAN SIMPSON: Yes, I just would like to say I think that the Addendum was written in a way to allow this type of flexibility. I think the amount of work that has gone into it justifies that we're well within the original intent of that addendum.

CHAIR DYAR: Thank you, see if we can do this again. **Any objection to the motion? Seeing none; it passes by consent**. All right, rock and rolling.

CONSIDER PLAN REVIEW TEAMS' REPORT ON BOARD TASKING TO REVIEW *DE MINIMIS* PROVISIONS FOR SCIAENIDS

CHAIR DYAR: The next item on the agenda is one that is going to bear a little more discussion, I believe. We have Consider the PRTs report and Board tasking to review *de minimis* provisions for sciaenids. Again, some discussion here, but this presentation will be from Tracey Bauer.

MS. BAUER: Start off with an outline of what I'm going to cover in this presentation. I'm going to go through the background behind the issues that states have been having with *de minimis* here on the Sciaenids Board and why we're discussing this today, before we move in to the PRTs discussion and recommendations, and then potential next steps.

To focus discussion, I want to start off with a reminder that established in the Commission's *de minimis* policy, *de minimis* provisions and interstates FMPs are meant to reduce the regulatory burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of the species.
In recent years there has been reoccurring issues related to how *de minimis* is defined for several Sciaenids Board species. On the table here I have, and it lays out the current stock definition, *de minimis* threshold, i.e. the percentage of the coastwide landings, number of years of landings averaged, what states were most recently granted *de minimis* based on requests in the states fishing year 2024 Compliance Reports for each of the Sciaenids Board species.

All Sciaenids Board species have a 1% threshold for *de minimis*, and average three years of data. Only Atlantic croaker considers *de minimis* separately by sector and red drum now considers *de minimis* separately by stock. More specifically, in regards to the issues states have been having, states that were previously *de minimis*, particularly those on the edge of the species range such as New Jersey and Delaware, have had highly variable landings in recent years.

In particular for spot and Atlantic croaker. This has resulted in states repeatedly following just above or at the 1% threshold for *de minimis*. Recent compliance reports and in discussions with the Board, states have noted how a single year of unusually high landings averaged with two years of lower landings contributed to their state falling just above the *de minimis* threshold.

States have also noted high uncertainty in the MRIP estimates being used to calculate *de minimis* for their state. In addition, it's been noted that other states in the management area, which previously made up the majority of the fishing effort, have experienced large declines in landings, disproportionate to the states on the edge of the range.

This has caused in some cases, the states on the edge of the species range to suddenly contribute to a larger portion of harvest. There are a lot of moving pieces contributing to these issues of states hovering around the *de minimis* threshold. To sort of illustrate what I mean, on the table here I have the *de minimis* calculation percentage for Atlantic croaker. This is recreational data only using a 1% threshold in a three-year average. White cells indicate that the value is below the current 1% threshold., meaning the state qualifies for *de minimis*, and the orange color is just to show you those values on the edge. It's just values between 1 and 2%, meaning the state did not technically meet the threshold for *de minimis*, but still had low landings relative to the rest of the coast.

You can see with New Jersey and Delaware; they are right along that 1% line. For these reasons states hovering around and above the 1% *de minimis* threshold have repeatedly requested continued *de minimis* status, noting that they wish to make sure it's a consistent trend before officially becoming non-*de minimis*.

These states have expressed concern with the appropriateness of the definition of *de minimis* and how meaningful any regulations they implement would actually be on a stock, especially considering the states relatively low contribution to the coastwide landings compared to other states, and the administrative burden to implement new regulations for non-*de minimis* states to remain compliant with the FMP.

It's also important to note that managers will likely continue to see increased variability and uncertainty in landings and changes in which states qualify for *de minimis* due to environmental factors,

which contribute to the cyclical nature of recruitment in adult abundance of some of these species, and potential ongoing stock expansion.

This may not be a problem essentially that will go away soon. As a result of these ongoing issues, in August 2025 the Board tasked the PRTs for the sciaenid species to provide recommendations on whether the current 1% threshold for a state to be considered *de minimis* is appropriate, and whether there may be alternate ways to evaluate whether a state is *de minimis*.
In other words, whether there may be alternate ways to evaluate whether a state's measures have negligible effect on the conservation of a species. PRT has met 4 times between November 2025 and April 2026. To start off the PRT did agree that the current 1% threshold used for Sciaenid Board species may not always be appropriate for all the species.

However, the PRTs were not able to recommend a one-size-fits all solution, as they did not think one would be appropriate. Instead, they discussed several different ways this issue could be addressed, and stressed that the appropriateness of a definition of *de minimis* needs to be evaluated on a species-by-species basis, based on the species life history, available assessment information and other differences in the fisheries.

Lastly, before I get into the possible options the PRTs discussed in the memo, I need to go over two important points the PRTs wanted to make sure were communicated to the Board. First the PRTs stressed the importance of being cautious about the amount of leeway allowed the states who wished to remain *de minimis* despite not qualifying for it, particularly if the state has no regulations in place for a species and there are concerning trends in stock status.

Second, the PRTs recommend any changes to the definition of *de minimis* or *de minimis* process undergo review by the species respective Technical Committee prior to or as part of the development of an Addendum Amendment with the goal of ensuring that the proposed change will have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species. The options that the PRTs are recommending, either are a modification to the current definition of *de minimis*, or modified *de minimis* process itself.

I do want to note as I go through these different options, the PRTs do not necessarily recommend implementing multiple options for a single species, but it can be done. I'm going to start off reviewing the two options under modifications to the current definition of *de minimis*. First A, changing the number of years of harvest averaged and B implementing multiple thresholds.

Changing the number of years of harvest average using something like a five-year average instead of the currently used three-average, may be appropriate for some longer-lived species, if the landings data are highly variable or in cases where the stock may be undergoing expansion, as a smoother and any single year of data would be less impactful in calculating *de minimis*.

This is a running theme for all of these approaches. The PRTs caution that this option should be evaluated on a species-by-species basis. Next, the PRTs brainstormed the idea of multiple thresholds as a possible solution or part of a possible solution to the ongoing *de minimis* issues in the Sciaenids Board species.

This option proposes multiple threshold levels and could be combined with the option I just previously went over the number of years averaged. If a state's average landings for the most recent three or five years are less than 1% of a coastwide harvest, that state would qualify for full *de minimis* with no measures or monitoring for compliance with the FMP necessary.

If the states landings for the most recent 3 or 5 years are greater than or equal to 1% but less than 3% of the coastwide harvest, a state would qualify for what we're calling provisional *de minimis*. The addition of this provisional category would recognize the state's landings are greater than that 1% threshold, but still relatively low to the coastwide landings.

Although a state that falls into provisional *de minimis* would not need to implement new measures or monitoring to remain in compliance with the FMP, a state that falls in this category would not be able to liberalize their current regulations for that species at all. Lastly, the third category. If a state's average landings for the most recent 3 to 5 years are greater than or equal to 3%, all non-*de minimis* compliance measures and monitoring would apply.

The PRTs also proposed that a hard line be drawn between provisional *de minimis* and non-de minims. If a state moves from provisional or full *de minimis* into non-*de minimis*, meaning that they are crossing that threshold of 3%, they can no longer request continuance of *de minimis* unless they are extenuating circumstances.

Because of the amount of flexibility that this multiple threshold approach allows, allowing states to not need to implement measures and monitoring to remain in compliance with the FMP until they reach that higher 3% landing threshold. The PRTs recommend the multiple threshold approach only be used when the stock is doing well. If this approach was implemented for a species, if the species PRT has concerns about the stock after reviewing the most up-to-date information on stock status, the species PRT could recommend the use of a strict 1% threshold for *de minimis* the following year, which would then need to be approved by the Board. Lastly, the PRTs discussed that the multiple threshold approach may not be appropriate for all Sciaenids Board species.

For example, spotted sea trout, which has multiple assessments up and down the coast. The species stock status could vary up and down the coast, or if a species stock status can frequently change, as we want to avoid frequent changes to how we define *de minimis*, that could get a bit messy.

Before I move into proposed options of potential changes to the process, I wanted to give you all an idea of what the two modifications to the definition of *de minimis* might look like, with spot as the example using past data. This is for recreational and commercial data combined, which is how *de minimis* is currently calculated for spot.

I'll get into separating the calculation of *de minimis* by sectors in a bit. Also, you'll note in these figures that I did not use exact percentages, which is because there is some confidential commercially involved in these calculations, so I wanted to make sure that was all excluded. The dark blue 1% means that total harvest in that state or jurisdiction in that year was less than 1% of the coastwide total, so that state qualified for *de minimis* in that year.

When a box is just green that means that the total harvest of spot in that state or jurisdiction for that year was greater than or equal to 1% of the coastwide total. They were technically non-*de minimis*. The figure on the left shows whether or not a state qualifies for *de minimis* using the three-year average, and the figure on the right uses the five-year average.

Again, this doesn't actually reflect which states were or weren't *de minimis* in years, because of the leeway we were giving to some states. Some states would request they remain *de minimis*, despite no longer technically qualifying for it or states that qualified for *de minimis* may not request it.

This is just purely from a calculation standpoint, what states do or do not qualify for *de minimis*. In comparison, this is that same data that you just saw in the previous graph, but incorporating the multiple thresholds. Again, the dark blue 1% means the state or jurisdiction would have qualified for full *de minimis* that year.

The blank yellow box means that that state or jurisdiction would have qualified for provisional *de minimis*, meaning that the state's total harvest for that year was greater than or equal to 1% of the coastwide total, but less than 3%. If a box is green with greater than equal to 3%, this means that the state would not qualify for *de minimis* and would be non-*de minimis*.

Again, we have it for both using a three-year average and a five-year average. You can see the

differences made by the three and five-year average and what states in the past would have qualified for full *de minimis*, provisional *de minimis* et cetera. PRTs also discussed a few alternate ways to address the state's issues with *de minimis*, which would be modifications to the *de minimis* process itself. This includes codifying the number of years before a state can no longer request *de minimis* status, and an option where states would remain non-*de minimis* or *de minimis* for a certain number of years after qualifying for a year. As previously mentioned, currently a state can request *de minimis* despite not technically qualifying for it.

The state will usually include reasoning as to why the requesting continues with the *de minimis* status, like if they want to see if it's a consistent trend before they officially become non-*de minimis* and need to adopt measures or monitoring to be in compliance with the FMP. The PRT will review the request and make a recommendation.

In the past the PRT has usually recommended a state remain *de minimis* if it is the first time going over the 1% threshold in a long time, and usually say that if the state continues to fall above that threshold for a specific number of years, then the PRT will no longer recommend continuance of *de minimis* for that state.

The Board then obviously makes a final decision on whether or not to grant the de minims request. This approach suggested in 2A would officially establish the number of years the state can request continuance of *de minimis* status despite no longer qualifying for it. The benefit to this would be that everyone knows the expectations ahead of time instead of it being just a PRT recommendation provided when they are reviewing the reports.

The PRTs do not recommend a specific number of years in this memo. This is something that would need to be determined on a species-by-species basis. However, they do recommend that it be non-consecutive. For example, if a state does not qualify for *de minimis* 3 out of the last 4 years, the request can no longer be granted unless there are extenuating circumstances.

This is one other possible option to address the issues that the Sciaenids Board is seeing in the species. This last option is a result of the PRTs brainstorming, ideas of ways to provide stability to states that may frequently fall just above or below the *de minimis* threshold, in regards to the implementation of measures or monitoring to remain in compliance with the FMP.

Once a state is officially no longer *de minimis* there could be a set number of years before a state can qualify for *de minimis* again, regardless of their landings and vice-versa. If a state's *de minimis* request is approved, there could be a set number of years that they can remain *de minimis*, regardless of their landing.

Again, this is really going towards increasing stability for states that have been jumping in and out of *de minimis*. They know for a certain number of years we don't need to implement these regulations at least. Finally, the PRTs discussed a few other modifications to *de minimis*. The *de minimis* provisions didn't exactly fall under the other two umbrellas. First, considering *de minimis* separately for the commercial and recreational sectors.

This has previously been recommended by the Spot PRT for spot and similarly the PRTs thought that it should continue to be considered on a species-by-species basis in consultation with the Technical Committee. As promised, to illustrate the impacts of the split that have, I'll add a few figures comparing which states would qualify for *de minimis* using the current 1% threshold, averaging over 3 years and 5 years split by sector. First on this slide I have just recreational data who would have qualified for *de minimis* in the past 10 years. In this next slide, this is separated out. This is just commercial data, who would have qualified for *de minimis*, again using 1% average 3-year and 5-year. Next, the PRTs discussion touched on the concept of splitting *de minimis* by stock, which was recently implemented for red drum. The PRTs recommended that splitting *de minimis* by stock should continue to be considered on a species-by-species basis.

If a species has two or more stocks which are managed separately, the PRTs thought that it made a lot of sense for *de minimis* to be similarly evaluated at the stock level. Finally, the PRTs briefly discussed the possibility or the impact of considering total removals instead of total harvest when determining *de minimis*, noting total removals would allow for a more complete picture of each state's potential effect on conservation of the species.

Currently however, consideration of total removals would only be possible in combination with splitting *de minimis* by sector, as obviously state specific commercial discard estimates are not available on an annual basis. There is also some more discussion in the memo regarding how only using harvest to determine *de minimis* for these species may overestimate the impact on a population from states with lower commercial harvest and little to no discards, and underestimate the impact from states with higher commercial harvest and discards.

Moving into possible potential next steps. Overall, the takeaways from the PRT are that any of the options that they've put forward in this memo that the Board wish to explore further, should be examined on a species-by-species basis, and that the species Technical Committee would need to provide input on any definition of *de minimis* related to the conservation of the species.

The PRTs are looking for direction from the Board on how to proceed. They were sort of pulled in all different ways with all the different species and the different ways that could be done with this, all the different analyses that could be done with this. Any input on the Board, if they want to do anything else or what they want to do, will be helpful. I just have here some possible next steps that could be considered by the Board.

You know, they could task the PRT or TC to explore an option or options to provide species specific recommendations. They could wait for each Plan Review Team to meet for FMP reviews to discuss the issue, initiate an addendum for one or more species, or wait util another issue comes along and fold this into any other future addendum, or it is up to the Board discretion on where you would like to move from here next. With that happy to take any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Great, thank you, Tracey, I really appreciate that thorough review of kind of a lot there. I wanted to thank also the PRT members from all the different board species for a lot of work in developing this. There is a lot to look through, a lot to think about, and a lot of if this or then that. I really appreciate their time. I'm going to go ahead and open it up for now, see where we can kind of maybe hone in on some things. I have Rich Wong and then Joe Cimino. Go ahead, Rich.

MR. RICHARD A. WONG: I would like to thank Tracey and the PRT for an amazing job on that review. You could tell there was a tremendous amount of thought put into that memo. There were some really sensible options there that would help us. You know we're just trying to maintain management stability, regulatory stability without jeopardizing the coastwide stock at all. I think all of those options make a lot of sense, particularly the multiple thresholds and provisional standards in the sector splits.

This really would help the states that are hovering on around the current 1% *de minimis* threshold. It would certainly maintain stability for us. Thank you for that, and I would like to pursue this a little further. You know most of the work has been done. I feel like with the PRT review and the memo. We would want to start to initiate an addendum to implement some of those options, or provide those options for public review.

CHAIR DYAR: Thank you, Rich, I agree. Joe.

MR. JOE CIMINO: Tracey, great job. This is exactly what I was hoping for when we were talking about this at the annual meeting. I really appreciate the work that went into this. I do have one question on the calculations. When you say coastwide, you are showing those states in the plan. When you're looking at coastwide is that all landings for the coast? Because I know our neighbor to the north

probably needs to start thinking about sitting on this Board as well.

MS. BAUER: Yes, Joe, that is a great question. Coastwide is a bit of a misnomer. I am only using the states in the management area. Management area-wide would be more accurate.

MR. CIMINO: Then I do have one other question that will maybe roll into the guidance. I might look to our resident *de minimis* expert, Toni Kerns, who I would say that, because Toni carried a lot of water on the *De minimis* Policy that we were trying to create an overarching policy.

What we saw during that is that it's almost impossible to get a way that some species, life species considerations, even if you do have some overarching things. I am in full agreement with the V-team on that. But I guess if we wanted to look at something like a threshold, but do that at the larger policy level, and who becomes the group to do that, I guess would be my question.

CHAIR DYAR: Toni, go ahead.

MS. TONI KERNS: We want to make a threshold a part of the actual policy that we have, then we would have the Policy Board task staff, I guess to look into that, and if we feel like we need some help then we'll ask for some help for you all that will be the Policy Board.

CHAIR DYAR: I would think we would want to be specific about which areas we want to have be a broad sense, but yes, agree. Go ahead, Joe.

MR. CIMINO: I think that that would help the situation for spot and croaker. The Delaware and New Jersey have been in in particular, is to have that provisional *de minimis* that doesn't allow them to be more active. But I would like to see that at a different policy level, so I may just wait until Policy Board, and maybe even a later policy board if we don't have time for it today. But to maybe get that on an agenda there to have the discussion there.

CHAIR DYAR: One thought here too is it could be considered as, I think Tracey touched on it. But you know, if we're going to start looking at this on a species-by-species level and having some overarching component. You know these are going to have to go through addendums, and I think we want to be sensitive to the staff and tasking addendums and the overwork. Making sure that we want to incorporate as many things as we can and timely as we can with some of these addendums. Go ahead, Toni.

MS. KERNS: Quick follow up to that, Ben. I just note that just because we have an overarching policy doesn't actually mean that each species follows that policy, it's whatever is in the addendum. What we had said when we created the policy is, as addendum come up. If that species board wanted to do something different than what was already in the addendum, or if the addendum didn't match up with the policy, and the Board wanted to match the policy.

Then they would do an addendum to do so. But they could hold their FMP as it stood, or if they wanted to do something that was slightly different than the policy itself, we just needed to provide rationale for why we wanted to do something different, and that those changes could be made through an addendum. Even if thresholds aren't in to not end up being in the overarching policy, this Board could still utilize them with rationale.

CHAIR DYAR: Great, thanks for that clarification, and further the point of you know maybe it is time you can look at these things as they come up. It depends on, obviously the timing of stock assessments and things like that. But specifically for spot and croaker, maybe some low hanging fruit. We do have some assessments coming through. If we do want to attach some of these things and decide on them then, that might be an opportunity. But again, the will of the Board. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Thank you to Tracey and the PRT for exploring this pretty thoroughly. I had a question about, under additional considerations, the idea of looking at total removals when

determining *de minimis* status. The paper mentions that we don't get commercial discard estimates as timely as we do recreational, which is kind of baked into MRIP.

But for states that have commercial fisheries that we know have high discards of sciaenids such as spot and croaker. Did the PRT talk about how they probably, if we used total removals that they probably wouldn't get *de minimis* status, only because we know that the discards in some of these fisheries far exceed the landings for things like spot and croaker?

MS. BAUER: Clarification question. When you say that they wouldn't get *de minimis* status, you mean the states that don't have a high, or the states that do have those high discards?

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, the states that do. They might have like really low landings, but they have commercial fisheries with high discards of these species. If we were looking at total removals, would that basically mean they really couldn't qualify for *de minimis*, just because we know the volume of discards to the total removals is probably going to be greater than the 1% threshold in most cases.

MS. BAUER: Yes, I think the conversation focused around the assumption that states with really large fisheries, like say spot and croaker, and really high discards of the species in the commercial fisheries would have such a high proportion of the coastwide total removals that it would dwarf anything from the smaller states with less directed effort.

Even if they have somewhat higher discards compared to what landings are bringing in. The focus is more on that part of it and not like whether or not the commercial discards might be higher in those states that aren't bringing as many landings, and that might tip them over the other edge and have the negative effect that they were looking for.

CHAIR DYAR: Any thoughts or questions on paths moving forward? There might be some, again maybe not a directive or a motion or any task today. If there is that is fine, but you know maybe you're looking forward to, again like we said, the stock assessment is coming up. Ethan, go ahead.

MR. SIMPSON: Yes, I think to your earlier point about those stock assessments coming up. It sounds like with spot and croaker being the species of concern in this regard that those are next on the docket. That seems like a reasonable time to address a lot of these concerns.

I think that goes along as well with the consideration that these need to be looked at species by species. You do have highly variable life histories for these species, so there are implications down the road. I do think going at it, species by species as they come up, seems to be a reasonable approach.

CHAIR DYAR: Rich.

MR. WONG: What is the timeline for the new assessment for spot and croaker? New assessments.

CHAIR DYAR: I don't want to speak out of turn.

DR. SCHLICK: Hi, I'm CJ Schlick; I'm the SAS Chair for those assessments and I'm going to be presenting a brief timeline. But the croaker stock assessment is going to Peer Review in July, with being presented to the Board at the annual meeting this year. Spot will be proceeding next year and coming to annual meeting at 2027.

CHAIR DYAR: Yes, Rich.

MR. WONG: I'm just trying to work through the information here. I'm not sure how the stock assessments will affect this particular issue, particularly for our situation for spot and croaker. I'm just trying to figure out how there is a benefit to waiting for the stock assessment. We have regulatory requirements already built into the *de minimis* requirements, depending on the stock status. I mean those are already reflected in the definition. I'm just trying to think, since you had brought that up. What is the benefit to waiting, what is the rationale for waiting?

CHAIR DYAR: I can let Joe go, just my comment was that if there is a requirement for something after the assessments for spot and croaker, since there might be interest in separating by sector or separating by stock, and there is an addendum required at the end of that assessment process, then that can be then tacked on and added to that addendum, instead of creating a separate addendum and separate process tasking staff that are already going to be dealing with this process within the next year was the thought. But I have Joe.

MR. CIMINO: Yes, just a follow up on that, Ben. I think for a state like New Jersey, who is probably coming out of *de minimis* soon and needs to get regulations in place. A, it's just unofficial to have an updated assessment to convince the public that it needs to happen.

B, if considering the states load to carry too, it would be tough to jump to one set of regulations and get the assessment, find out that we need to have even further restrictions. Then go right back and start changing regs again. If we have the discussion of where the stock is, you know where regulations need to be, then we can do that all at once. That would be helpful.

CHAIR DYAR: Carrie.

MS. CARRIE KENNEDY: Yes, I think to Joe's point earlier. I would like the Policy Board to sort of review and process and sort of comment on the memo. I don't know if that means that the Board has to sort of approve the memo to send it to the Policy Board, or if we just want to task the Policy Board to review it.

Then I think timing wise, you know maybe the timing of an addendum coming out of a stock assessment, and you know recommendations or a formal review by the Policy Board might also sort of coincide to have something to put into a potential addendum.

CHAIR DYAR: Regarding the Policy Board, Toni.

MS. KERNS: The Policy Board doesn't need to approve this particular memo. If we want to take components of this memo and have it included in the overarching policy that we already have on *de minimis*, then that would be the direction or someone would just bring that up and ask staff to take a look at the components of this memo to see if we can incorporate that concept into the overarching policy.

But this Board doesn't need to approve the memo that the various PRT members put together, I'll call it omnibus PRT put together. You know this Board would use that information as they wish to address here, an omnibus addendum or addendums as they come about. I guess you could, since it's not that far away, in terms of the croaker assessment.

You could look at it, and if we're nervous that we're not going to have a document or something, then after the assessment comes out, if there isn't anything then we could initiate an omnibus addendum at that time. It wouldn't adjust the timeline significantly, I don't think.

CHAIR DYAR: With that I guess, Rich, go ahead.

MR. WONG: I understand, so process wise there is an advantage to having one addendum after the assessment, in case there are regulation changes required. I just don't' want to lose the momentum from this memo. You know this memo was great. It hit all the nails on the head. In that case, if we wait for both assessments to be finished, then we're talking like two years, maybe for that addendum. That is my concern is just, I guess I would ask Tracey. Are the staffing and cost associated with waiting worth it in the waiting for two years, I guess?

MS. BAUER: I will say for Atlantic croaker, obviously finishing later this year, then we start the addendum we've initiated we would start it then. But spot is a whole other year and then you would have to start. There is like a disconnect there between Atlantic croaker and spot, of when those two would get started. I know that doesn't directly address your question. Staff workload, I mean a lot

of that is really up to the will of the Board of what you guys are interested in doing.

CHAIR DYAR: Toni.

MS. KERNS: If I am allowed to make a recommendation, Rich, to just be helpful. I think it would be best, efficiency wise, it would be great if we could wait until we see what happens with the croaker assessment. If an addendum comes forward then we will figure out a way to package this in with that.

I won't promise exactly how it's done, but we will package the whole deal, everything. Whatever species you all want to address at that time, I'll say that. If we don't need an addendum at that time, then the Board could talk about starting one just for these issues. But since it's only the annual meeting, I don't think it's that far off. If you wanted to task, you know think about things that you would want to see in the policy.

Tracey just said that she could use a little direction. You could think about that over the course of the next couple weeks, or somebody can send her an e-mail and she can start to think about things ahead of time so that she's working on it, but she doesn't have as tight of a timeline, since she'll be busy with assessment reporting and probably some summer flounder, scup, black sea bass things, sector separation, so that she can spread out her workload a little better.

CHAIR DYAR: I think of ones, we have quite a bit of flexibility here in how we do it. We can look at this just with croaker and address that right away, or as Toni mentioned, at that time if we want to lump another species or there is a priority for some reason, then we can address it then.

To Joe's point, not only is it staff timing and workload and things like that, considerations. But something that comes out of that assessment might direct us how we want to address *de minimis* as well, depending on what that assessment says for each species. But again, the will of the Board. Is there any? Yes, Rich.

MR. WONG: Just one final thought. We were ready to initiate a motion here. But I think given the information, I am fine with waiting. That makes a lot of sense logistically. I just want to ask the Board to don't let the momentum die down next year on this issue. That memo was great, so we just want to just keep it in mind.

CHAIR DYAR: Agreed, and you know I don't think these issues are going to go away any time soon, so I don't think they can be forgotten. But point noted for sure, it was a great document. There were some comments regarding bringing some things to the Policy Board. If there is interest there, I think that we can do that. But I think there was a request to be kind of specific about which components that we wanted to bring to the Policy Board. I think Joe, you mentioned it, Carrie did as well. Is there any interest there?

MR. CIMINO: I don't know about doing it as a motion from this Board. One of the things I worry about is hitting them cold without getting a similar presentation on why it was so meaningful to this group. I think we could do that quickly. I think it may be something that needs to be on their agenda as a discussion topic.

I don't know, maybe folks could throw in their ideas. I was particularly interested in the idea of that multiple thresholds with a provisional *de minimis* and then hard stops set around those. You know number of years that that could stay in place.

CHAIR DYAR: Thanks, Joe, noted. I don't know if it's best or how to do that. It seems like a presentation at the Policy Board or some high level. Is that kind of the thought there so they can have the information, or at least present to them with a packet or something prior to a meeting. Your next meeting, later today.

MS. KERNS: I'll talk to Dan and Tracey, and we'll get that on the agenda for August.

CHAIR DYAR: Great, thank you. Any other topics on this point? Any other discussion? Great.

PROGRESS UPDATE ON 2026 ATLANTIC CROAKER BENCHMARK STOCK ASSESSMENT

CHAIR DYAR: Moving on to the next we have Progress Update on the 2026 Atlantic croaker benchmark stock assessment by CJ Schlick.

DR. SCHLICK: Thank you for having me. I just want to give you a brief update on the progress of the Atlantic croaker stock assessment and the timeline for both Atlantic croaker and spot moving forward. We last came to the Board with an update on the stock assessment at the annual 2025 meeting.

There have been several developments within this stock assessment that has slowed up progress. One of which is that instead of a single population this has been modeled as two separate stocks split in central North Carolina. Also, we had several staffing issues over the years, last two years, that has changed our modeling crew. That delayed several milestones. With that we also decided to decouple the Atlantic croaker and the spot stock assessments with staffing concerns.

Spot assessment will initiate after the Atlantic croaker is completed. We have reached the final milestone for this. The Assessment Workshop was completed in March, and we did a final SAS review series in April. We have two functional models that we are in the process of writing up now. The remaining timeline for this is the Final Report will be going to the TC for review in May. They should have it finished by June, and we will be going to Peer Review in July, with the intention of bringing this in front of the Board at the annual meeting in November. Upon completion of the Peer Review, the SAS will start the spot stock assessment. We'll be data collection starting in July, model development and revisions through the fall and winter, and going to Peer Review in June, 2027 with the intention of going to the Sciaenids Board here at the annual 2027 meeting.

However, this does bring up one question for the Board, in terms of the traffic light update. The traffic light was last updated for the Board in summer, 2025. The spot TLA was not triggered and management action was no longer required. The TC still recommended to maintain the current regulations and the Board agreed. However, we are asking whether or not we should be updating the TLA for spot this year, given that the completion of the stock assessment will be the annual meeting 2027. I will be available for any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Thank you, CJ. Any questions for CJ? All right, any thoughts on feedback for traffic light? Erika Burgess.

MS. BURGESS: CJ thank you for posing the question. I don't see, unless anyone on the Board disagrees with me, the need to produce a traffic light analysis at the same time we're completing the stock assessment. But I'm sure others may have a different idea.

CHAIR DYAR: Chris Batsavage.

MR. BATSAVAGE: Yes, I agree. It's always nice to see where we are, but knowing we have a planned stock assessment coming up and potentially management action after that. I don't know if we would be implementing any management measures after this next traffic light analysis if we know that there is a stock assessment coming up pretty quick. We could run it later if the assessment is delayed, but I tend to agree. I think it's probably best to let the TC and SAS focus on getting ready for the assessment, as opposed to updating the TLA.

CHAIR DYAR: I did have a question. Worst case scenario, assessments are done and for some reason not recommended for management use, and we want to switch to the TLA again. What is the timeline for running that to get feedback and information back? Do we know, typically? Chris McDonough.

MR. CHRIS McDONOUGH: I can address that pretty easily. The way the TLA is run, almost everything is coming out of what would be available already for the stock assessment, so updating it would be a pretty quick exercise.

CHAIR DYAR: Great, thank you. CJ.

DR. SCHLICK: I will note for Atlantic croaker we did update the TLA to compare to the stock assessment, so that you have a side-by-side comparison, and the spot was last updated in 2025.

CHAIR DYAR: Any other questions for CJ? Great, thank you, CJ, appreciate it. Final agenda item, update on the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program by Pat Campfield.

UPDATE ON THE SOUTHEAST AREA MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

MR. PATRICK A. CAMPFIELD: Good morning, everyone. The Southeast Area Monitoring Assessment Program or SEAMAP has a new strategic plan or a five-year strategic plan, so we wanted to give you all a quick update on what they're up to, and plans for 2026 through 2030. As a refresher, SEAMAP has three different regions, the South Atlantic, the Gulf and the Caribbean.

The current surveys in the South Atlantic include the Coastal Trawl Survey, the Reef fish or SERFS Survey, multiple state longline surveys and the Pamlico Sound Survey, noting that that Pamlico Sound Trawl Survey is going through some transition with the vessel and piloting new methods.

The map on the bottom shows representation on the South Atlantic Committee from each of your four states, as well as NOAA Fisheries by the South Atlantic Council and our coordinator Janita Patel. The overarching goals of the New Strategic Plan are to maintain long term survey time series, modernize surveys for efficiency and respond to adaptive management needs.

Major themes within the SEAMAP Plan include expansion of current surveys. One example again is the SERFS or Reef Fish Survey that has started to take trap video surveys north of Cape Hatteras, in anticipation of some species moving around the Cape, as well as some expansion of video surveys as far down as the Florida Keys.

We also have thoughts and ideas on new surveys, but would still need new funding for those, including nearshore live bottom habitat, as well as a need to develop a cobia fishery independent survey, and we put in a proposal for that, haven't been funded yet. But that is a glaring need for cobia stock assessments.

Then also, needs to survey ichthyoplankton to get a handle on recruitment. We also have some cross survey program enhancements, including a need to do some bottom mapping for low relief habitats, relevant to red snapper and some other species that seem to be more abundant than folks thought, have low relief habitats.

Also, look at new statistical methods for combining your state longline survey data, and also look at statistical methods for comparing catches between the trap video surveys and the area that they monitor versus the coastal trawl survey sampling. SEAMAP has always done well and continues to strive to fold in emerging technologies among all of the surveys. There is some pretty cool work that is being led by Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute to use machine learning to process the Trap Video Survey data.

This is just one image showing automated species identification that can be used to develop abundance metrics, but essentially teaching the computer to identify, in this case this is red snapper and I think a red porgy in those boxes. That is still in the pilot testing phases, but we hope to use that more broadly in the South Atlantic Region.

We also highlight in the strategic plan the numerous survey data uses. The table at the top summarizes all the FMPs that use SEAMAP survey data, federal FMPs, ASMFC regional plans, as well as individual state plans. Then the bottom row there shows additional data requests for research activities outside of the states and the federal agency, where we have shared the data and they resulted in numerous publications. The bottom take poll specifically shows again the numerous stock assessments that SEAMAP survey data have been used in.

I won't go through those individually, but after 40 plus years of survey data collection it is pretty impressive, and we'll keep that going. Then we also thought it would be important to provide some economic value numbers in the strategic plan for Congressional outreach and other outreach purposes, to maintain funding support for SEAMAP.

We pulled together some numbers and the coastal fisheries between North Carolina and Georgia are estimated to generate 12 billion dollars in economic impact and roughly 40,000 jobs. Florida was handled differently, because of course this coast, you have both coasts in the Gulf and South Atlantic, but total 41-billion-dollar economic impact, 160,000 jobs.

The SEAMAP surveys were programmed budget specifically ranges between 5.1 and 6.7 million dollars annually. The budget has been pretty strong, pretty solid and consistent for the last five years or so, including some plus up funds in the last couple of years. We also have a figure in there showing what increasing cost it would require to keep the surveys going, again for outreach to Congress.

Those are numbers that we share with Bob and Alex when they make their Capitol Hill visits. But encourage you to look into the strategic plan if any of your individual state delegations are going to the Hill there are some number there you all could use. Then to wrap up, last year SEAMAP revised their websites, SEAMAP.org, so again, encourage you to check out the website.

There is a lot of great information in there if needed for individual state purposes or for outreach purposes. Then if you have any bright ideas, or if there are things that we missed in the new strategic plan, that is your South Atlantic committee representation and contacts. You're welcome to reach out to myself, or to Janita if you have any fresh ideas to address management needs. With that, Mr. Chairman, I'll stop and take any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Thank you, Pat. Any questions? Great job, I appreciate it. Thank you for the update.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIR DYAR: Under Other Business we had a couple of comments there, so Chris Batsavage.

SPOTTED SEATROUT COLD STUN EVENT IN NORTH CAROLINA

MR. BATSAVAGE: Appreciate the opportunity to update the Board on the cold stun event that occurred in North Carolina this past winter. North Carolina closed the recreational and commercial spotted sea trout fishery on February 6, due to the cold stun events. Staff confirmed instances of cold stun fish in multiple counties, and also confirmed that water temperatures were at or below the critical lethal temperature threshold of 3 degrees Celsius for spotted sea trout.

Cold stun events in most of North Carolina's estuarine waters. Amendment 1 to the North Carolina spotted sea trout fishery management plan specifies that if a significant cold stun event occurs, the Division of Marine Fisheries will close all spotted sea trout harvest through the end of June. The intended closure is to allow the spawning fish a chance to spawn in the spring before harvest reopens. North Carolina also closed the spotted sea trout fishery in 2025 due to cold stun events, but it's not common to have significant cold stun events in consecutive years. We often document other species, fish species dying during cold stun events, and this year included striped mullet, southern flounder and multiple reports of red drum.

However, it is not common for many red drum to die due to cold stun, which is a concern, because of the increasing trends of fishing mortality has touched the northern population in recent years. They kind of put it in context the last time there was a lot of dead red drum from a cold stun in North Carolina was in 2003, and that greatly impacted the 2001-year class of fish.

Impacts that the 2026 cold stun events had on spotted sea trout and other species are currently unknown, but fishery dependent and fishery independent sampling this year should provide some insight into at least the relative impacts. Anyways, this is a quick summary of what happened and how we responded, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIR DYAR: Any questions for Chris? Ethan.

MR. SIMPSON: No questions, but I also wanted to essentially say the same thing occurred in Virginia, we also experienced a cold stun event. Our commercial fishery closed down in February. Our recreational fishery took a little bit longer, just to get through the regulatory process.

But we also closed our recreational fishery in April. Essentially the same concerns that Chris already outlined. We also experienced those below optimal temperatures. We did also see a number of red drum, but similarly, we don't really know the effects that will have, at least for a little while.

CHAIR DYAR: Rich.

MR. WONG: Thanks, Chris, for that update. I was in North Carolina during that '03 that winter mortality as well, and I remember thinking at the time, you could probably try to quantify the mortality there at the time. But now, with drones and all that and new technology, did you try it? To try to get a number of those mortality events?

CHAIR DYAR: Chris.

MR. BATSAVAGE: No, we don't. I guess with at least the spotted sea trout stock assessment for North Carolina, I guess how it's handled is we're able to look at the different natural mortality estimates that occur, especially during years where there are cold stun events versus when there aren't. Although we can't really come up with an estimate of how many fish died during that year, The impact of the cold stun event at least is factored into the stock assessment model.

CHAIR DYAR: I know that we got lucky in South Carolina, even though we dipped below well below the thresholds for our shrimp populations and even that for spotted sea trout. We didn't see any major impacts, major fish kills and the reports coming from some of our trawls are looking good for shrimp. I think what helped us is that we saw a slow cooling down before temperatures really dropped. But definitely impacted our states to the north, hate to hear that. Erika, you had other business as well.

MS. BURGESS: I do, but on the cold stun event. We also had a fish kill in Florida related to it. To Rich's question, at first the fish sink, so depending upon water quality you can't image the fish well and get a reliable estimate. They eventually float, but sometimes things happen before they float. Predators take them away, opportunistically the wind can blow them away into different areas.

Just like in North Carolina, we rely on a fishery independent index to track the impact of a particular cold stun event, and we've been able to see them in our indices. It tracks really well. One, it gives us confidence that indices are tracking real abundance, and then thankfully we've observed each time that it's occurred, a strong rebounding in the following year. I hope that North Carolina sees the same thing for their population.

Regarding Florida's recent regulatory changes effective April 1st of 2024. We implemented holistic regional management for spotted sea trout. You may remember me talking about this before. We've implemented it for red fish and snook, sea trout is our third species. We've divided the state into 9 management areas, based on habitat types and water sheds.

On the east coast of Florida, we have 3 regions, the northeast, the central east and the southeast. Sorry, I said central east that is the old name, we have the Indian River Lagoon, it is that body. We did modify our sea trout regulations in two of those regions, based on observed declines in our stock assessment and reports from the public about lack of abundance of larger sea trout.

Our previous regulations allowed recreational anglers in the northeast to retain one fish over the slot limit per vessel or one per person if fishing from shore. We removed that allowance, so now anglers can only keep fish between the 15-to-19-inch slot limit, and we reduced the northeast vessel limit from 5 fish per person to 3 fish per person.

In the Indian River Lagoon, the current bag limit is 2 fish per person, we left it at that level and we removed the ability to keep one fish over the slot, so same as the northeast. We've made more conservative regulations in response to observed declines in sea trout, and if you have any questions about this management approach, please let us know. We will be evaluating impacts of this past winter's cold weather later this year, and may recommend additional rule changes.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR DYAR: Any questions? Any other business to come before the Board? All right, seeing none; motion to adjourn. Spud, second Malcolm. All right, thank you very much.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m. on Wednesday, May 6, 2026)