

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

Decision Document for Tautog Draft Amendment 1

Section 1.1 Statement of the Problem

(1) *Management Areas* – The 2015 benchmark stock assessment and peer review support a regional management approach to reduce overfishing and account for tautog’s very limited coastwide movement. The delineation of management areas is being considered.

(2) *FMP Goals and Objectives* – The goals and objectives for this management program are being reviewed to ensure they are consistent with the needs of the tautog fishery and resource.

(3) *Management Measures* – Management measures within regional management areas are being considered, for example should states have conservation equivalency within a management area or should all states within a management area standardize measures, or a combination of the two.

(4) *Reference Points and Rebuilding Timeframes* – To increase spawning stock biomass and yield to the fishery, the Draft Amendment will consider new reference points and stock rebuilding timeframes to guide management within regional stock management areas.

(5) *Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing* –The illegal harvest of tautog is not an emerging issue, rather a pervasive issue that has perforated the fishery for 10+ years. The Draft Amendment will explore avenues to suppress the illegal harvest of tautog, including but not limited to a commercial harvest tagging program. Recommendations on this issue are included as part of the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee investigation, and are not included in this document.

Section 1.2.2 Stock Assessment Summary

The 2015 benchmark stock assessment, which considered data through 2012, indicates tautog is overfished and overfishing is occurring on a coastwide scale.

Draft Management Options

This document is a summary of PDT discussions on Draft Amendment 1. It is intended to be a guide to assist in the Board deliberation process and includes draft management options for Board consideration. The PDT requests feedback from the Board on the draft management options in the document so that the draft options can be modified and/or elaborated upon.

In addition, the PDT has begun writing sections of Draft Amendment 1 that do not require management action.

Section 2.4.1 Management Areas

Regional management was considered when the species became managed by ASMFC in 1996, but not implemented due to insufficient data. In the most recent 2015 benchmark stock assessment, new analyses of biological and fisheries information by the Technical Committee (TC) determined the “coastwide” stock unit is inappropriate. The TC determined a regional approach reduces the risk of overfishing individual sub-stocks and provides a better stock assessment than the coastwide structure currently used.

The options in this section are to determine management areas/boundaries. For reference, table 2 summarizes the proposed regions and their associated stock status based on results from the 2015 benchmark assessment.

Option A. Status Quo

The management unit consists of all states from Massachusetts through North Carolina.

Note: North Carolina does not have a current declared interest in the management of tautog.

Option B. Three Regions

Option B
1) Massachusetts–Rhode Island
2) Connecticut–New Jersey
3) Delaware–North Carolina

Option B recognizes the Long Island Sound (LIS) as a shared resource for Connecticut and New York, and groups Connecticut with New York and New Jersey. New York and New Jersey fish on a shared stock in the ocean south of Long Island, and New York and Connecticut fish on a shared stock in LIS. This meta-complex of stocks provides improvement in assessment and management over the status quo coastwide scale. However, this regional breakdown groups Connecticut and New Jersey, which do not appear to fish on the same tautog stocks.

Option C. Four Regions:

Option C
1) Massachusetts–Rhode Island
2) Long Island Sound (Connecticut–New York)
3) New York–New Jersey (excluding LIS)
4) Delaware–North Carolina

Option C was developed to create separate LIS and New York-New Jersey (excluding LIS) management areas. It was not part of the 2015 peer-reviewed assessment (though it was an item of thorough technical committee discussion) and will need additional analysis, review, and discussion. It takes into account the overlap in fishing areas between New York and Connecticut and the likelihood that tautog found in LIS represent a population for assessment and management purposes with minimal overlap in fisheries or

tautog movements between adjacent jurisdictions (e.g., RI, NJ). In recent years, harvest from LIS has accounted for 29% of coastwide landings. For these reasons, the Technical Committee acknowledges managing LIS as a discrete area may be appropriate. It is expected that peer reviewed stock assessments for both LIS and the NY-NJ (excluding LIS) assessment areas will be available for Board consideration at the August 2016 meeting.

Table 2. Stock status for the proposed stock management area options. This table is intended as background information and provides information on the reference points for the management areas explored in Section 2.4.1.

Stock Region	Stock Status	SSB Target (lbs.)	SSB Threshold (lbs.)	SSB** 2013 (lbs.)	F Target	F Threshold	F** 2011-13 Average
Coastwide							
Coastwide (Massachusetts to Virginia)	Overfished Experiencing Overfishing	45,441,681	34,081,261	10,762,968	0.10	0.13	0.30
Three Regions							
Massachusetts, Rhode Island	Overfished Experiencing Overfishing	5,804,771	4,354,130	3,553,852	0.16	0.19	0.38
Connecticut, New York, New Jersey	Overfished Experiencing Overfishing	11,375,853	8,642,121	5,200,705	0.17	0.24	0.34
Delaware, Maryland, Virginia*	Overfished Not Experiencing Overfishing	4,607,661	3,483,304	3,377,482	0.16	0.24	0.16
Four Regions							
Massachusetts, Rhode Island	Overfished Experiencing Overfishing	5,804,771	4,354,130	3,553,852	0.16	0.19	0.38
Long Island Sound (CT, NY)^	Status Unknown		Unknown			Unknown	
New York, New Jersey (excluding LIS)^	Status Unknown		Unknown			Unknown	
Delaware, Maryland, Virginia	Overfished Not Experiencing Overfishing	4,607,661	3,483,304	3,377,482	0.16	0.24	0.16

* North Carolina is also considered part of the Delaware, Maryland and Virginia stock unit, but it has not declared interest in the management of tautog.

** Red numbers indicate the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring; yellow is cautionary; green is within management limits.

^Stock status information for these areas are not available at this time. Assessments should be completed by the first half of 2016, and subsequently followed by a peer review.

Section 2.5.1 Definition of Overfishing and Overfished

The PDT recommends establishing a definition of overfishing and overfished that can be applied to any stock unit or management area (Option B).

Option A. Status Quo

The Plan defines overfishing as a rate of fishing exceeding the natural mortality rate ($M=0.15$). This overfishing definition is consistent with the slow growth and long lifespan (greater than 30 years) of this species. In addition, this conservative reference point is warranted given the uncertainty in stock structure and in the spawning biomass required to maintain at least average recruitment.

Option B.

Overfishing Criteria

Overfishing occurs when the fishing mortality rate exceeds the fishing mortality threshold for one year.

The Management Board will evaluate the current estimate(s) of fishing mortality (F) with respect to its reference points before proposing additional management measures. If the current F exceeds the threshold levels, the Board will take steps to reduce F to the target level according to the F reduction schedule in *Section 2.5.2*. If current F exceeds the target, but is below the threshold, the Board should consider steps to reduce F to the target level. If current F is below the target F, then no action would be necessary to reduce F.

Overfished Criteria

The stock is overfished when spawning stock biomass (SSB) falls below the spawning stock size threshold.

The Management Board will evaluate the current estimate(s) of SSB with respect to its reference points before proposing additional management measures. If current SSB is below the threshold level, the Board will take steps to increase SSB to the target level according to the rebuilding schedule in *Section 2.5.2*. If current SSB is below the target, but above the threshold, the Board should consider steps to increase SSB to the target level. If current SSB is above the target SSB, then no action would be necessary to increase SSB.

Section 2.5.2 Stock Rebuilding and Fishing Mortality Reduction Schedule

The PDT discussed a timeframe to eliminate overfishing. The Board could take immediate action that results in reducing overfishing, however the PDT recommends reducing F to (or below) the target within three years.

The PDT discussed a 50% or 70% probability of reducing F to the target within a three timeframe, however a consensus was not reached on a specific probability of achieving F target as there is no clear guidance on the Board's risk tolerance when it comes to managing tautog.

The rebuilding schedule is a plan to increase SSB back to its target level, based on maintaining F at or below its target over a period of time. Given the slow growth rate of the species, the PDT suggests a ten year timeframe to rebuild the stock when overfished.

Option A. Status Quo

A rebuilding schedule is not identified in the current FMP. The only requirements are to achieve $F_{target} = 0.15$ and set a uniform 14 inch minimum size.

Option B.

Ending Overfishing (Reducing F to the Target)

The Board shall reduce F to a level that is at or below the target within a maximum of three years.

Probability of Achieving F Target

The Board will use a X% probability of achieving F target in three years.
SSB Rebuilding Schedule

When the stock is overfished (below SSB threshold), the Board will take efforts to rebuild the stock to SSBtarget within ten years.

The Technical Committee will review progress of SSB toward its rebuilding target on a regular interval (through stock assessments) and make recommendations to the Board regarding rebuilding progress. Upon review of the TC recommendations, the Board may adjust management measures in an effort to remain on its rebuilding schedule.

Section 4. Management Measures

Based on the management areas defined in *Section 2.4.1*, the Board may select to manage recreational and commercial fisheries (1) as a region or (2) state-by-state within a region. If managing by region, the Board would define uniform management measures across a region that each state would implement. If managing state-by-state within regions, the states would complete conservation equivalency proposals with various management measures that achieve the management goal decided on (e.g., percent reductions in harvest needed to achieve F target).

For example, once the Board decides on regional management areas (*Section 2.4.1*), and the timeframe to reduce F to the target (*Section 2.5.2*), the stock assessment subcommittee can project an estimated harvest reduction needed to achieve F target. That harvest reduction could be achieved through uniform management measures within regions, or through each individual state identifying a management program to reduce harvest by that percentage.

The PDT discussed the benefits of managing tautog by region, which include (1) MRIP data are more reliable when pooled by region, (2) equitable access to the resource across all states in a region, (3) regulations are easier to enforce when uniform across the entire region, and (4) tautog have limited north-south movement, therefore they generally don't move between regions, but may move across states within regions.

The PDT also acknowledged that state by state management could be effective and will provide states with more flexibility.

Section 4.1.1 Size Limits

A minimum size allows young fish to reach maturity and enhance stock levels through reproduction. The FMP specified minimum size limit is 14 inches, however, all states have gone beyond this requirement in an effort to reducing fishing pressure (Table 3). If a regional management approach is chosen, the PDT suggests a minimum size limit within each management area, for the recreational and commercial fishery, of 16 inches. This recommendation has law enforcement and biological merit. Studies have shown that larger females produce significantly more eggs than smaller females, therefore, allowing fish to reproduce at larger sizes should help overfished stocks (which is present in all management areas) recover. Given the degree of illegal fishing in the fishery, law enforcement recommends a standard minimum size across all proposed regions to eliminate loopholes when fish are moved across state lines.

Option A. Status Quo

Uniform 14 inch minimum size limit for the recreational and commercial fishery within the coastwide management unit.

Option B.

Each regional management area will establish a 16 inch minimum size limit for the recreational and commercial fishery.

Table 3. Current minimum size regulations for tautog by state

State	Recreational	Commercial
Massachusetts	16''	16''
Rhode Island	16''	16''
Connecticut	16''	16''

New York	16''	15''
New Jersey	15''	15''
Delaware	15''	15''
Maryland	16''	16''
Virginia	16''	15''

Section 4.1.2 Possession Limits

The PDT believes possession limits are a management measure that should be established within each regional management area.

Within a region, states could opt for a 1) *regional standard* (all states within a region would have same possession limit) or 2) *regional targets* (each state within a region could set their own limits such that each state meets the regional F reduction).

The PDT requests guidance from the Board on the preferred method to manage the regions before specific management measures can be recommended (i.e. regional standard or regional targets)

Section 4.1.3 Seasonal Closures

The PDT believes seasonal closures are a management measure that should be established within each regional management area.

Within the region, states could opt for a 1) *regional standard* (all states within a region would have the same seasonal closure dates or 2) *regional targets* (each state within a region could set their own seasonal closures such that each state meets the regional F reduction).

The PDT requests guidance from the Board on the preferred method to manage the regions before specific management measures can be recommended (i.e. regional standard or regional targets)



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmf.org

January 20, 2016

To: Tautog Management Board
From: Tautog Law Enforcement Sub-Committee
RE: Commercial Harvest Tagging Program Objectives

Sub-Committee Members: Adam Nowalsky, (Tautog Board Chair), Dan McKiernan (MA), David Simpson (CT), Lt. Jason Snellbaker (NJ, LEC rep), Lt. Doug Messeck (DE), Major Pat Moran (MA)

Staff: Ashton Harp, Mark Robson

At the Annual Meeting, November 2015, the Tautog Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (Subcommittee) presented recommendations to address illegal harvest of tautog. Subsequently the Tautog Management Board (Board) requested the Subcommittee develop objectives for a commercial harvest tagging program and explore tagging systems that can be applied to a live fish. The Subcommittee met via telephone conference on January 12, 2016.

Staff reviewed key questions for the Subcommittee to consider during the meeting, and then summarized the striped bass commercial harvest tagging program (Appendix 1). Members noted that the striped bass tagging efforts vary across states, including tag type, method of tag distribution, and cost per tag. Members agreed that a tagging program that was consistent across states would be more applicable for this fishery, given this tagging program has the additional challenge of finding a tag that can be successfully applied to a live fish without negative biological or market impact. Members agreed that an approach similar to the American lobster trap tagging program would be more amenable to the perceived goals of the tautog tagging program. The American lobster trap tagging program is centralized under ASMFC, whose role is to negotiate a contract with an agreed upon vendor, and to coordinate the coloring and ordering of tags each year.

The Subcommittee came to a consensus on four initial program objectives for the Board to review at the February 2016 meeting. The Board can add to or modify these objectives as necessary.

Objective 1: Implement a verifiable tagging system that can aid enforcement and help identify illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fish from reaching markets.

Objective 2: Use tags of a consistent type and style among all states that include standardized identifiers of year, state, and tag number.

Objective 3: Employ tags that are single-use only. Tags must be difficult to replicate, and color should be coordinated to individually identify each state. All unused tags should be required to be returned or otherwise accounted for annually.

Objective 4: Implement a tagging program that will accommodate both the live and dead commercial fish markets. The tags used must be easy to attach, secure and have minimal to no impact on the appearance or condition of live fish for the amount of time that live, tagged fish are maintained until consumption.

As a whole these objectives feed into the perceived goal of the commercial harvest tagging program which is to provide accountability in the commercial fishery and minimize IUU fishing, while utilizing methods that are easy for fishermen to use and do not detract from fish quality or marketability, and serve as a tool for law enforcement.

In developing the above objectives the Subcommittee considered the following issues:

Fishery Comments

- The tautog fishery and market may be significantly more diffuse and de-centralized than American striped bass or American lobster, however more information on the market is needed. This makes development of a tagging program more valuable for enforcement and harvest monitoring.
- The live tautog market presents unique considerations that limit comparison with other species tagging programs.
- In a number of states, it is believed fish are harvested in large quantities and then immediately shipped out of state to specific markets, notably New York or Pennsylvania. This reinforces the need for tags that are easily identifiable by state.
- Speaking directly with commercial advisors to better understand the market is necessary, a memo should be sent to the Advisory Panel to request input on the commercial harvest program design (Appendix 2)
- Some states have limited access permits while others have a more open fishery. This complicates the cost and distribution of tags, and affects the ability of a given state to implement point-of-harvest vs. point of sale tagging requirements. Table 1 provides an overview of regulations by state.
- The Subcommittee believes there is a significant problem of recreational fishermen engaging in illegal sale without the proper permits. Tagging would curtail the problem.
- Live fish are hardy and may survive for months in tanks. It is possible for live fish in a market to be from the previous fishing year. Due to the hardiness of the fish it is believed tags will not impact survival.

Potential Tagging Vendors

- NY suggested *Pentair* as a potential vendor, link to tags: <http://pentairaes.com/lake-management-equipment-and-supplies/fish-tagging/show/all>. These types of tags would require special pliers to use.
- Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) suggested *Hallprint* as a potential vendor, link to tags: <http://www.hallprint.com/fish-tag-products/2014/8/26/self-locking-tags>. The cost would be around USD 0.80 each, perhaps slightly less for larger quantities.

Tagging Trials

- NY representatives indicated they have identified a facility to test tag prototypes on live tautog, but testing will not begin until late April or May due to tautog availability. NY would like to use fish caught in NY waters and this is not possible until that timeframe. They are also looking for a graduate student to assist. This information was provided via a follow-up, one-on-one call because NY representatives had a time conflict and could not join the Subcommittee call.
- Subcommittee members indicated on the call that it would be helpful to have a tagging trial update at the May Board meeting

Tagging Process Comments

- The question of whether to have point-of-sale or point-of-harvest tagging requirements may depend on whether states have limited-entry or open fisheries.
- From an enforcement perspective, point-of-harvest tagging is ideal in most circumstances but Subcommittee members agreed that for this fishery, point-of-sale tagging would be a tremendous improvement in accountability and traceability.
- Point of harvest tagging is the best way to eliminate IUU fish from entering the market because dealers and harvesters participate in the black market. If point of sale tagging is implemented then there is a high likelihood that dealers will continue to purchase IUU fish and mix them with legal fish, while tagging both.
- Point of harvest tagging and a limited-entry program have the benefit of potentially reducing tagging costs
- Point-of-harvest tagging would work better for the harvest and landing of dead tautog, while point-of-sale tagging would work well for the live fish market.
- The technical requirements of a tag suitable for live fish have not been determined and may dictate where, when and how the tag should be attached. Potential areas to tag are: through the opercula, around the caudal peduncle, or through the dorsal muscle anterior to the dorsal fin.
- Any tags considered for use should be carefully tested and evaluated with the assistance of law enforcement personnel. There is ample experience with tags that are not suitable, resulting in misuse and re-use.
- Requiring the return of unused tags would assist states in determining the extent of their fishery in establishing quotas or commercial harvest limits.
- A targeted effort to document issues and violations should be an integral part of any tagging program roll-out.

The Subcommittee discussed several issues that merit further discussion by the Board.

1. Further design of the tautog tagging program would be greatly aided by input and advice from experts in the tag industry, the tautog Advisory Panel, commercial fishermen, and elsewhere as needed. *Are there specific commercial advisors that could be contacted to gain additional knowledge on the market aspect of this fishery, specifically seeking input on market structure (centralized vs. decentralized) and market acceptance of tags.*
2. The Subcommittee is at the point of starting to review vendors for tag type and cost. *Are there specific tagging vendors the Subcommittee should evaluate?*

3. Individual state participation is needed to begin researching and testing various tagging systems, particularly for live fish. *Are states available to test tag prototypes on live tautog?*

4. The mechanics of a tagging program will greatly depend on whether the commercial fishery is managed more narrowly as a limited-entry or quota-based system, or remains more of an open fishery established within commercial harvest limits. *Does the Board prefer a quota-based system, limited entry/quota based system or open fishery with harvest limits, etc.?*

Table 1. Commercial regulations for tautog by state

STATE	SIZE LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMITS (number of fish/vessel/day)	OPEN SEASONS	2015 QUOTA (lbs.)
Massachusetts	16"	40	Apr 16 - May 23 Sept 1 - Oct 31	54,984
Rhode Island	16"	10	Apr 15 - May 31 Aug 1 - Sept 15 Oct 15 - Dec 31	17,116 13,390 17,116
Connecticut	16"	10	Apr 1- Apr 30 Jul 1 - Aug 31 Oct 8 - Dec 24	-
New York	15"	25 (except, 10 per vessel when fishing lobster pot gear and more than six lobsters are in possession)	Jan 1 – Feb 28 Apr 8 – Dec 31	-
New Jersey	15"	> 100 lbs requires directed fishery permit	Jan 1 - 15 June 11 - 30 Nov 9 - Dec 31	103,000
Delaware	15"	5 3 5 5	Jan 1 - Mar 31 Apr 1 - May 11 July 17 - Aug 31 Sept 29 - Dec 31	-
Maryland	16"	4 2 4	Jan 1- May 15 May 16 - Oct 31 Nov 1 - 26	-

Virginia	15"	-	Jan 1 – Jan 21	-
			Mar 1 – Apr 30	
			Nov 1 – Dec 31	

* FMP gear regulations: A pot and trap used to catch tautog shall have hinges or fasteners on one panel or door made of one of the following degradable materials: 1) Untreated hemp or jute string of 3/16 inch in diameter or smaller; 2) Magnesium alloy fasteners; or 3) Ungalvanized or uncoated iron wire of 0.094-inch diameter or smaller.

** New York: In addition to other fish pot or trap requirements, it is unlawful to take or possess tautog using fish pots or traps, unless there is one circular vent measuring in 3 1/8 inch opening diameter.

Appendix 1: Striped Bass Commercial Harvest Tagging Program Overview January 12, 2016

Summary

In 2012, Addendum III to the Striped Bass FMP was approved by the Board. This addendum requires all states and jurisdictions with a commercial fishery to implement a commercial harvest tagging program. The addendum was initiated in response to significant poaching events in the Chesapeake Bay and aims to limit illegal harvest of Striped Bass. As shown throughout this document, the tagging programs vary in many aspects, including the type of tags used, the level of monitoring occurring in the fishery, the method of tag distribution and the cost per tag.

**Questions to consider when developing the tautog commercial harvest tagging program.
Keep in mind, this may be more apparent after the program objectives are defined.**

- Should states have the flexibility to individually design their tagging program?
- Should all states use the same tag supplier? For consistency, for cost savings?
- Does law enforcement prefer consistent tags across states, or is tag type not a hindrance either way?
- Any lessons learned from the striped bass tagging program that we can improve upon for the tautog program?
- Where should the tags be placed on the fish? Potentially through the caudal peduncle or through the dorsal muscle anterior to the dorsal fin?

The following is specific to the striped bass commercial harvest tagging program.

Tag information and type

All tags used in a state or jurisdictions tagging program must be tamper-evident. Tags are required to be valid for only one year or fishing season. Tags are required to be inscribed with, at a minimum, the year of issue, the state of issue, and a unique number that can be linked back to the permit holder. Where possible, tags should also be inscribed with size limit. State should consider the use of bar codes or QR codes imprinted on tags, for use in tracking fish from harvester to dealer to buyer, as the technology becomes more available.

Tag timing

States or jurisdictions with a commercial fishery may choose to implement their commercial tagging program at either the point of harvest or the point of sale.

Tag allowance

States and jurisdictions with a commercial striped bass fishery will be required to allocate commercial tags to permit holders based on a biological metric. This option is intended to help prevent state or jurisdictional commercial quota overages, which will contribute to the health and sustainability of the striped bass population

Tag allowance examples include:

- In New York, the number of tags issued is equal to the average weight of striped bass harvested in the fishery in the previous year divided by the total striped bass quota assigned to New York by the ASMFC.
- In Virginia, the number of striped bass tags issued to each permitted fishermen equals the estimated number of fish to be landed by that fishermen's harvest quota based on their average catch from the previous year. A buffer of 10% of the total number of 22 tags issued to the fishermen is included. Fishermen may request additional tags from the VMRC if they use their initial allotment.

Striped Bass Commercial Harvest Tag by State

MASSACHUSETTS: *Example of commercial striped bass dealer tags for Massachusetts. Dealers are required to attach a tag to any striped bass shipped to a state that with tagging requirements.*



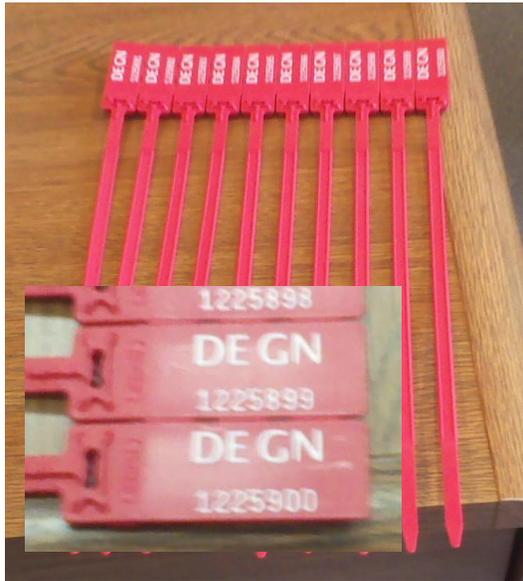
RHODE ISLAND: 2012 commercial striped bass tags for Rhode Island. Tags are 8.25 inches in length. Black tag (left) is valid for harvest with a “Fish Trap” permit. Yellow tag (right) is valid for harvest under a “General Category” permit. Tag colors change annually.



NEW YORK: 2008 striped bass tag for New York. Tags are 8.5 inches in length. The metal tags are imprinted with a seven digit code which designates the year (first two digits) and the serial number (last five digits). Tag colors do not change annually.



DELAWARE: Striped bass tags for Delaware. Delaware regulations require commercial fishermen to tag striped bass with their allocated commercial striped bass tags (left). Tags are inscribed with state, approved gear and a unique identification number. Commercially caught striped bass must also be weighed and tagged (right) at a weigh station. The fishermen and weigh station tag colors change annually.



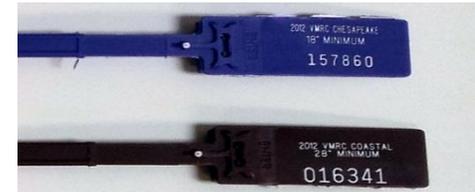
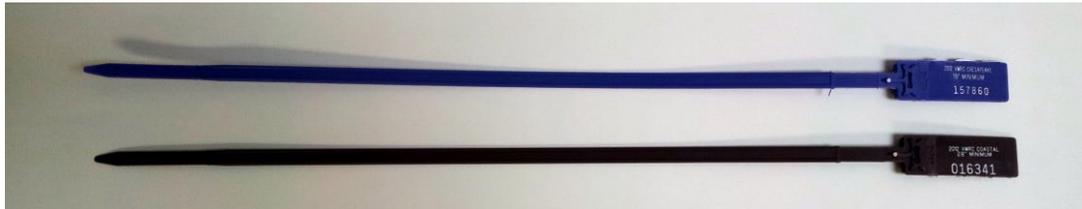
MARYLAND: Maryland hook and line commercial striped bass fishery for 2011. Tags are inscribed with the year, gear code, state, fish code and a unique number.



POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION: 2012 commercial tag from Potomac River Fisheries Commission. Tags are 13.5 inches in length. Tag shown (in black) is for the haul seine gear. Refer to Table 5 information on tag color scheme for other gears.



VIRGINIA: 2012 commercial striped bass tags from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (top). Blue tag (top tag in bottom left photo) is valid for harvest in Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay. Black tag (bottom tag in bottom left photo) is valid for harvest in the Atlantic Ocean off of the Virginia coast. An example of a legal sized commercially tagged striped bass in Virginia in 2011 (bottom right photo).



NORTH CAROLINA: 2012 Commercial striped bass tags for North Carolina. Tags are seven inches in length. Blue tags (top) are valid for harvest in the Albemarle Sound Management Area. White tags (bottom) are valid for harvest in the Atlantic Coast off of North Carolina.



Size Limit on Tag	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
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[^] MA was granted an extension through Addendum III and mandated to implement a commercial tagging program prior to start of 2014 fishing year.

^{*} MD changed tag color scheme in 2014 from five to three which reflects commercial fishery transition to an ITQ system between 2013 and 2014 fishing seasons.

⁰ Sates are required to allocate commercial tags to permit holders based on a biological metric. Most states used the average weight per fish from the previous year, or some variation thereof. Actual biological metric used is to be included in State Annual Commercial Tag Reports.



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmf.org

January 20, 2016

To: Tautog Advisory Panel; Commercial Fishermen
From: Tautog Law Enforcement Sub-Committee
RE: Tautog Commercial Harvest Tagging Program

The Tautog Management Board (Board) has initiated Draft Amendment 1 to the Tautog Fishery Management Plan. Among other issues, the Board intends to address illegal harvest in the tautog fishery.

To investigate potential avenues to suppress illegal harvest a Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (Subcommittee), comprised of commissioners and law enforcement, was formed. The Subcommittee, with guidance from the Board, is designing a commercial harvest tagging program. The goals and objectives of this program will be discussed at the February 2016 Board Meeting (see Appendix 1, Draft Program Objectives).

The Subcommittee seeks commercial participants in the tautog fishery to provide input and advice as the tagging program is developed. The commercial advisors will be contacted to gain additional knowledge on the market aspect of the tautog fishery. Specific questions include, but are not limited to:

- From your point of view, describe the supply chain from dock to market.
- Is the market centralized (a few major buyers) or de-centralized (lots of small-scale buyers)?
- Describe the buyers (restaurants, fish markets, individuals, etc.)?
- Do you sell to buyers within your state or is the resource transferred across state lines, or internationally?
- Where is the major regional market(s) for tautog?
- A substantial portion of the commercial market is live fish, do you recommend a specific location to place the tag on the fish so that it does not affect fish quality?

If you, or someone you know, would like to serve as a commercial advisor for the design of a tautog commercial harvest tagging program please reach out to Ashton Harp at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.