



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

2017 Winter Meeting Summary

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

2017 Winter Meeting
Alexandria, VA
January 31 – February 2, 2017

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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ATLANTIC HERRING SECTION (JANUARY 31, 2017)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Herring Section Approves Draft Addendum I for Public Comment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Section approved Draft Addendum I to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring for public comment. Draft Addendum I includes management options to ensure the seasonal quota is distributed throughout Trimester 2, are applied consistently by the states adjacent to Area 1A, and address excessive capacity.

The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to the accelerated rate of Area 1A Trimester 2 (June through September) landings in recent years and the increasingly dynamic nature of days out measures to control effort that have varied across states. The Section utilizes days out of the fishery to slow the rate of Area 1A catch by restricting the number of available landing days. Landing reports indicate vessels are harvesting herring on days out of the fishery and transferring fish at-sea to carrier or larger vessels until landing is permitted. The practice of fishing outside of landing days has limited the effectiveness of the days out program in controlling the rate of harvest.

The Draft Addendum presents six management options to improve the performance of the Area 1A fishery, ranging from restricting a vessel from landing fish caught on days out of the fishery to limiting transfers at sea as well as the amount a vessel can land per week. The document also seeks input on a tiered weekly landing limit for future management consideration.

The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by February 10, 2017. It is anticipated Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New Jersey will be conducting public hearings in March/April. The details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Section will review submitted public comment and consider final approval of Addendum I at the Commission’s Spring Meeting in May 2017.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-01

Motions

Move to approve the request of the New England Fishery Management Council to add a non-voting member seat for the development of Addendum I.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion carries (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – ME, RI, CT, NY; Opposed – MA, NJ; Null – NH).

Move to approve Draft Addendum I for public comment with the exception of Section 3.2 items reviewed by the PDT but not developed.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion carries unanimously.

Move that the Herring Section recommend to the ISFMP Policy Board to write a letter to the GARFO Office requesting that the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts be granted access to the VMS pre-landing report.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Stockwell. Motion carries unanimously.

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (JANUARY 31, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The Tautog Management Board reviewed the results of the tagging trial that was conducted to test the feasibility of applying a tag to a live tautog. In addition, the Board reviewed the regional harvest reduction and projection analyses conducted by the Technical Committee (TC) and feedback provided by the regional working groups, initiated in October 2016, on harvest reductions and their impact on Draft Amendment 1.

A commercial harvest tagging program was recommended to increase accountability in the fishery and curb illegal harvest. To evaluate the feasibility of such a program a tagging trial was conducted to investigate the efficacy of a commercial tag that serves as a tool for law enforcement, while minimizing impact to the resource. Twenty-one tautog were collected for a thirty day trial. Fifteen tautog were tagged with a strap tag and six tautog served as controls. At the end of the trial, there was localized damage to the gill, but it was not life threatening or inhibiting the fish's ability to survive. At the conclusion of the study, the tags were removed and all fish were returned to the Long Island Sound. The research team provided tagging tips and the Board suggested the creation of short videos to illustrate how to apply a tag. At the October Board meeting, the PDT was given guidance to develop a comprehensive commercial tagging program in Draft Amendment 1.

The TC harvest reduction analysis was presented for the regions of Massachusetts-Rhode Island, Long Island Sound and New Jersey-New York Bight. In addition, feedback was provided on the regional working groups input on proposed harvest reductions. The regional working groups of Long Island Sound, New Jersey-New York Bight and Delaware-Maryland-Virginia requested additional TC tasks that would develop management measures there were consistent across the states within a region. Specifically the Board tasked the TC to evaluate recreational measures that would include a uniform 16" size limit and possession limit with consistent spawning closures across the region. In Long Island Sound and New Jersey-New York Bight, the Board tasked the TC to evaluate management measures for the DelMarVa region that would include a uniform 15" and 16" size limit and possession limit with consistent spawning closures across the region, as well as the impact of regional slot limits for the recreational and commercial fisheries and consistent spawning closures. Lastly, the Board elected to include SPR reference points for all regions, except Long Island Sound which will use MSY reference points in Draft Amendment 1.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move that the Massachusetts-Rhode Island region go out for public comment including only the SPR reference points.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion carries (7 in favor, 2 abstentions).

Move that the Long Island Sound region go out for public comment including only the MSY reference points.

Motion made by Mr. Alexander and seconded by Mr. Heins. Motion carries (7 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD (JANUARY 31, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The Winter Flounder Management Board maintained existing management measures for the inshore waters of Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) for the 2017 fishing season (May 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018), as shown below. Given management measures have been consistent in recent years, the Board intends to approve a three-year specifications package for winter flounder when the 2019-2021 specifications package becomes available.

Stock	Sector	Trip Limit/ Possession Limit	Size Limit	Season	Gear
GOM	Commercial	500 lbs/ trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end
	Recreational	8 fish	12"	NA	
SNE/ MA	Commercial	50 lbs/ 38 fish/trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end. 100-lb mesh trigger.
	Recreational	2 fish	12"	March 1 – December 31	

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (JANUARY 31, 2017)

Press Releases

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Draft Addendum XXV for Public Comment *Addendum Seeks to Address Southern New England Stock Declines*

Alexandria, VA – The American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXV to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster for public comment. The Draft Addendum seeks to address the depleted condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock while preserving a functional portion of the SNE lobster fishery. The document presents a suite of management measures to increase egg production and lower fishing mortality through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, and trap reductions.

The Draft Addendum responds to the results of the 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment which found the SNE stock is severely depleted and experiencing recruitment failure. Declines in population abundance were most pronounced in the inshore portion of the stock where environmental conditions have remained unfavorable to lobster since the late 1990s. These stock declines are largely in response to adverse environmental conditions, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years, combined with continued fishing mortality.

Draft Addendum XXV focuses on increasing egg production so that, if environmental conditions become favorable, the SNE stock can benefit from a strong recruitment year. The Draft Addendum includes six issues. The first proposes four targets to increase egg production, ranging from 20% to 60%, with an additional option for status quo. The second issue seeks input on proposed management tools to increase egg production and whether these tools should be used independently or in conjunction with one another. The third issue addresses the effects of proposed measures on the recreational fishery. The fourth issue explores the implementation of season closures and potential impacts to the Jonah crab fishery. The fifth issue examines whether management measures should be uniform across Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMA) in SNE. The sixth issue asks how management measures should be applied to the offshore waters of LCMA 3, which spans both the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank and SNE stock units.

The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by February 20, 2017. It is anticipated that the majority of states from Massachusetts through Virginia will be conducting public hearings; the details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Board will review submitted public comment and consider action on the Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017.

In other business, the Board initiated development of Draft Addendum XXVI to respond to the need for improved harvest reporting and biological data collection in state and federal waters. The Draft Addendum seeks to utilize the latest technology to improve reporting, increase the spatial resolution of harvester data, collect greater effort data, and advance the collection of biological data offshore. The Board will receive an update on the development of Draft Addendum XXVI at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May 2017.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-02

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Jonah Crab Addendum II

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum II to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Addendum establishes a coastwide standard for claw harvest and a definition of bycatch, based on a percent composition of catch, in order to minimize the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch allowance.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the equity of the claw provision established in the 2015 FMP, which instituted a whole crab fishery with the exception of fishermen from New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia who have a history of claw landings prior to June 2, 2015. Following approval of the FMP, claw fishermen from New York and Maine were identified and, while these fishermen had a history of claw landings, they were required to land whole crabs under the provisions of the FMP. Addendum II permits claw harvest coastwide. Specifically, the Addendum allows Jonah crab fishermen to detach and harvest claws at sea, with a required minimum claw length of 2.75” if the volume of claws landed is greater than five gallons. Claw landings less than five gallons do not have to meet the minimum claw length standard. Fishermen may also harvest whole crabs which meet the 4.75” minimum carapace width.

Addendum II also establishes a definition of bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, whereby the total pounds of Jonah crabs caught as bycatch must weigh less than the total amount of the targeted species at all times during a fishing trip. The intent of this definition is to address concerns regarding the expansion of a small-scale fishery under the bycatch limit. Prior to this Addendum, a non-trap or non-lobster trap fisherman could land 1,000 crabs as bycatch but was not required to have any other species of catch on-board. Through Addendum II, fishermen harvesting under the bycatch limit must have another species on board of greater weight than landed Jonah crabs.

The Addendum is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/589501bcJonahCrabAddendumII_Jan2017.pdf. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-03

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXV for public comment to address stock declines in Southern New England, initiated Draft Addendum XXVI to improve reporting and data collection in the lobster fishery, and approved Jonah Crab Addendum II, which permits the harvest of claws coastwide and establishes a definition of bycatch based on percent composition. For further information on these Board actions, please refer to the above press releases.

In addition to the actions above, the Board also heard a report from the American Lobster Technical Committee (TC) on changing stock conditions in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Georges Bank (GBK). This analysis was requested by the Board after surveys showed a recent decline in settlement. The TC Report reviewed the role that ocean currents play in the life history of lobsters, investigated stock connectivity, provided evidence of decreased size at maturity, highlighted changes in the stock-recruit relationship, and explored management tools to increase the resiliency of the stock. In response to this information, the Board established a GOM/GBK Subcommittee to further review the TC's analysis and provide recommendations to the Board.

The TC also presented work on potential impacts to the lobster and Jonah crab fisheries as a result of the New England Fishery Management Council's Omnibus Deep Sea Coral Amendment. The analysis investigates potential impacts to effort and revenue as a result of closures proposed around the offshore canyons, Mount Desert Rock, and the Outer Schoodic Ridge. Prior to passing this analysis on to the Council, the Board tasked the Lobster Advisory Panel with reviewing the analysis and providing industry comments.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move that Addendum XXV include the proposal for *de minimis* for the states of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion carries (9 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention).

Move that the overlap zone issue be added to Addendum XXV.

Motion made by Mr. Gibson and seconded by Mr. Keliher. Motion carries unanimously.

Main Motion

Move to approve Draft Addendum XXV for public comment as modified by discussion today.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Reid.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to approve Draft Addendum XXV for public comment as modified today and include an Option C under Section 2 to allow gauge size changes and season closures to be used either together or independently to achieve egg production increases.

Motion made by Mr. Burns and seconded by Mr. White. Motion carries (9 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstention).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to approve Draft Addendum XXV for public comment as modified today and include an Option C under Section 2 to allow gauge size changes and season closures to be used either together or independently to achieve egg production increases.

Motion carries 11-0-1 abs-0.

Move to initiate an addendum to improve harvester reporting and biological data collection in state and federal waters. The addendum should seek to: 1) utilize the latest technology to improve reporting; 2) increase the spatial resolution of harvester data; 3) collect greater effort data; and 4) advance the collection of biological data offshore.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Train. Motion approved by consensus.

Main Motion

Move to approve Addendum II to the Jonah Crab FMP with the following options: Issue 1, Option C (Claw Harvest Permitted Coastwide) and Issue 2, Option B (Bycatch Defined as Percent Composition).

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Luisi.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to revise Option C to read:

Option C: Coastwide Small Volumetric Claw Harvest Permitted

Under this option, only whole crabs which meet the minimum size of 4.75" may be retained and sold, with the exception of a one 5-gallon bucket allowance of detached crab claws per vessel per trip which may be retained and sold. Two claws may be harvested from the same crab.

Motion made by Ms. Murphy and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion fails (4 in favor, 6 opposed).

Main Motion

Move to approve Addendum II to the Jonah Crab FMP with the following options: Issue 1, Option C (Claw Harvest Permitted Coastwide) and Issue 2, Option B (Bycatch Defined as Percent Composition).

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes (7 in favor, 5 opposed).

Move to approve Addendum II to the Jonah Crab FMP as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes (Roll Call Vote: In favor – ME, NH, MA, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NEFMC; Opposed – RI, CT; Abstain – NMFS).

AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (JANUARY 31, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The American Eel Management Board met to receive an update on the stock assessment schedule and a summary of the Technical Committee's meeting from fall 2016.

The Board received a summary of the Stock Assessment Subcommittee's (SAS) meeting regarding the 2017 stock assessment update. For the update, the trend analyses of abundance indices developed from fishery independent surveys from the 2012 benchmark assessment will be updated-Mann-Kendall, Manly, Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA), and Power analysis. These analyses focus on detecting trends in abundance of young-of-year (YOY) and yellow eels at both the coast wide and regional level. The growth analysis based on biological data from various datasets will also be updated. The SAS will conduct work using fishery-independent and -dependent data through 2016. Neither the Depletion-Based Stock Reduction Analysis nor the Traffic Light Analysis will be updated since both of these analyses needed improvements, as recommended by the review panel, before they could be used

for management. Therefore, there will not be overfishing or overfished determinations made. Staff indicated that the planned completion date for the work will be fall 2017 with the goal of presenting the stock assessment update results to Board at the ASMFC Annual Meeting in October 2017.

Next, the Board was presented the Technical Committee (TC) Meeting Summary. The TC meeting focused on YOY surveys, reviewing updates on nematode research, Maine life cycle study, and otolith exchange. Additionally the group had a discussion of landings vs harvester reports. In considering the YOY surveys, the reviewed methods and results the TC discussed the challenges many have encountered across the coast in trying to collect important information of YOY eels. The group noted that not all YOY surveys provide equal information to the stock assessment, and there are current efforts underway to determine which surveys may be more informative if they were switched to focusing on other life stages such as yellow or silver. The TC recommended that if a state does seek to discontinue a YOY survey, another survey should replace it focusing on a different life stage. These changes must first be approved by the Board. The other significant discussion for the TC was how best to use commercial landings and harvester reports in assessing allocation moving forward. In recent Addenda, landings attributed to states have varied in using landing or harvester reports or sometimes both, when they are distinctly different types of information- commercial landings include the value for a specific amount of eels, whereas harvester reports can including eels that are harvested but not sold. In preparation for the stock assessment update, both data sources will be updated and the TC recommended that allocation issues should addressed after the assessment update is completed.

Lastly, North Carolina provided a brief update that a small amount of glass eels were collected through their aquaculture program. The state will provide a full update on their 2017 aquaculture program later on in the year.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (FEBRUARY1, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the FY16 Audit. The Committee approved the revised draft of the ASMFC Standard Meeting Practices Document, and the Guidelines for Management of State-Housed Employees. It received a positive report on the full integration of the ACCSP into the Commission. They discussed the use of Sections versus Management Boards and decided to leave the process as it currently is. Under other business, the committee discussed AP members who also serve as Board proxies and the potential conflict of interest. After a robust discussion, staff was directed to summarize the comments for the Committee and fully discuss the issue in May. Mr. Bullard of NMFS GARFO gave an overview of the current NOAA leadership in light of the transition due to the election of President Trump.

For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 1, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The Shad and River Herring Management Board met to review updated sustainable fishery management plans and a habitat plan, as well as the Technical Committee's (TC) recommendations regarding each document.

The New York Division of Marine Resources submitted an updated SFMP to harvest river herring in the Hudson River and some of its tributaries. The plan includes recent data and codifies more restrictive management measures that were first implemented by the state in 2013. The sustainability benchmark remains unchanged from the 2012 SFMP. Given the TC's support of the plan, the Board approved the updated SFMP.

The Maine Department of Marine Resources submitted a revised SFMP to harvest river herring, which includes a request to open the Card Mill Stream in the Town of Franklin for commercial harvest. Currently 24 municipalities actively harvest river herring on tributaries of larger rivers. Given the TC's support of the plan, the Board approved the revised SFMP. The TC recommended Maine consider the inclusion of a secondary sustainability threshold (repeat spawning ratio) in a future SFMP.

The Delaware River Basin Cooperative (Co-op) submitted a revised SFMP to harvest shad, which includes a request to move the mixed stock demarcation line and add a new mixed stock benchmark. Currently the demarcation line extends to a point in Delaware that does not align with Delaware's four reporting regions. The Co-op has identified three places for the line to move to and the Co-op's Policy Board recommends moving the line from its current position at Leipsic River to Bower's Beach (12 miles south).

The TC could not come to a consensus regarding the request to move the mixed stock demarcation line. Several members of the TC recommended approving the SFMP as written, but several others expressed concerns regarding the proposed mixed stock demarcation line. There was concern that moving the mixed stock demarcation line closer to the mouth of the Delaware Bay could expand effort on the mixed stock fishery because shad that were previously in the mixed stock portion of the Bay would now be deemed 100% Delaware River stock. Additional fishing effort (directed or bycatch) on a mixed stock could diminish shad stocks that are under restoration and cannot support fisheries in other areas along the Atlantic Coast.

The Board discussed the TC's concerns regarding the mixed stock demarcation line and the TC suggestion to move the mixed stock demarcation point (on the Delaware coast) to Port Mahon (2 miles south) instead of Bower's Beach (12 miles south), but ultimately approved the plan as originally proposed. Moving forward, the mixed stock demarcation line in Delaware Bay will run from Gandy's Beach (New Jersey) to Bower's Beach (Delaware).

Florida Division of Marine Fisheries Management submitted a Habitat Plan for American Shad in the St. Johns River, Econlockhatchee River, and St. Mary's River. The Board approved of the plan based on the recommendations of the TC.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to accept the New York Sustainable Fishery Management Plan (SFMP) for river herring, the Maine SFMP for river herring and the Delaware River Basin Cooperative SFMP for shad.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Stockwell. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to approve Florida's American Shad Habitat Plan.

Motion made by Dr. Duval and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion passes unanimously

Move to elect Mike Armstrong as Vice-chair of the Shad and River Herring Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Boyles. Motion passes unanimously

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (FEBRUARY 1, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to discuss several issues. Under public comment, Luis Leandro from the Marine Mammal Commission informed the Board that the Marine mammal Commission's annual meeting will be in April and encouraged stakeholders to attend. The meeting will examine marine mammal issues within New England, as well as priority topics at the national and global levels.

Chairman Grout updated the ISFMP Policy Board on the actions of the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee meeting summary).

The Board reviewed issues related to how illegal harvest is accounted for within states and found that policies are not consistent across states. In addition, there are differences in how states count the illegal harvest for species with quotas and how they are accounted for in stock assessments. In order to have a better understanding of the issue, specific practices by the states will be collected and presented to the Board at the Spring Meeting.

Jim Gilmore presented guidelines New York has recently established regarding safe harbor transfers, after experiencing two issues when conducting safe harbor transfer requests. Through the Board's discussion, it was learned other states have also established protocols on the issue. The Board discussed the merits of having generic policies states can use for safe harbor transfer requests. The Board established a working group to address this issue and present its findings to the Board at the Summer Meeting.

Chairman Grout updated the Board on the progress of the Climate Change Working Group. The Working Group met earlier in the week to begin development recommendations for both science and policy strategies to address the Board's task (to develop policies to assist the Commission with adapting its management to changes in species abundance and distribution resulting from climate change). The Working Group will draft white paper(s) based on the group's discussions and present them to the Board for consideration in August.

The Board set a commercial retention limit of 8 blacknose sharks for all Atlantic shark limited access permit holders in the Atlantic region south of 34°00'N. This action mirrors action taken by NOAA Fisheries. The Board was also presented with information on the proposed listing of the oceanic whitetip

shark as threatened by NOAA Fisheries and what information NOAA is seeking with regards to comment on the proposed listing.

The Board approved a request from the Atlantic Herring Section to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Office to request the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts be granted access to the VMS pre-landing report. Access to the VMS data will allow for timelier quota management.

The Risk and Uncertainty Policy Workgroup, which is developing a Commission policy to account for both scientific and management uncertainty in the Commission's decision making process, requested that scheduled spring workshop on the draft policy be delayed until the Summer or Annual Meeting. This will allow the working group additional time to finalize the details of the policy as well as receive feedback from both the Management and Science Committee and the Assessment Science Committee.

At the December Joint Meeting of the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Board requested that a summer flounder stock assessment be conducted in 2017. The Policy Board discussed how this could fit into the current Commission assessment schedule. After a thoughtful discussion, the Board requested the Commission explore an external summer flounder stock assessment and peer review for management use in 2018. New Jersey has offered funds to help conduct the assessment and peer review, if needed. The Board recognized the need to collaborate with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, which has been the lead on previous summer flounder assessments. The Board will raise the issue at its joint meeting with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in February. In addition, Commission leadership will bring up the need to prioritize a summer flounder assessment at the Northeast Coordinating Council meeting this spring, where the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee schedule is set.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to complement the NMFS implemented management measures with regard to the blacknose shark possession limit south of 34°00' N latitude for the 2017 fishing year.

Motion made by Dr. Duval and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes with 2 abstentions.

On behalf of the Atlantic Herring Section, move that the Commission write a letter to the GARFO Office requesting that the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts be granted access to the VMS pre-landing report.

Motion made by Mr. White. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move that the ASMFC explore moving forward with an external stock assessment and peer review for summer flounder for 2018 management use.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes (13 in favor, 2 opposed, 3 abstentions).

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 1, 2017)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board reviewed public comment on the Amendment 3 Public Information Document (PID), provided guidance on the management alternatives that should be included in Draft Amendment 3, and heard a report outlining the results of the socio-economic study on the commercial fishery.

The Board reviewed a summary of public comments received on the Amendment 3 PID. Approximately 300 individuals, in total, attended the 14 public hearings held along the coast and 25,606 written comments were received from individuals and organizations. In response to the comments received, the Board provided guidance on the management alternatives which should be included in Draft Amendment 3. In regards to reference points, the Board recommended the BERP continue work on menhaden-specific ERPs and explore interim reference points, including single-species reference points and existing guidelines for forage fish. The Board maintained all allocation methods included in the PID; however, the Board specified five timeframes for further analysis: 2009-2011, 1985-1995, 1985-2016, 2012-2016, and a weighted allocation between 1985-1995 and 2012-2016. In regards to quota transfers, the Board recommended options be developed which explore quota reconciliation and a transfer process with greater guidelines. The Board also recommended Draft Amendment 3 explore quota rollovers, with options ranging from no rollovers to 100% of unused quota being rolled over into the subsequent year. In regards to incidental catch, the Board expressed the greatest interest in options which count all catch in the TAC, including an option which allows for a small-scale fishery set aside, as well as an option which maintains the current bycatch limit per vessel. The Board also expressed an interest in the maintenance of the episodic events program with New York included as a participant in the set aside. For the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishing cap, the Board recommended three options: the maintenance of the cap, the removal of the cap, and the reduction of the cap to a level which reflects the most recent 5-year average of reduction harvest in the Bay. Finally, the Board agreed to include a research set aside program as an adaptive management tool in Amendment 3.

The Board also heard a report from Dr. John Whitehead and Dr. Jane Harrison on results of the socio-economic conducted on the menhaden commercial fishery. The study, which was initiated in March 2016, looks to characterize the coastwide commercial fisheries, including the bait and reduction sectors and the fishing communities they support. As a part of the study, surveys and in-person interviews were conducted with fishermen, dealers, and end-users, and economic analysis was conducted on landings data to determine economic impacts that arise from changes in the Total Allowable Catch. While an Executive Summary of the study was included in meeting materials, a final report on the socio-economic study will be available in late March on the Commission's website.

In order to maintain the current management of the cast net fishery throughout the development of Amendment 3, the Board approved the continuation of the provision which manages the cast net fishery under the bycatch provision until implementation of Amendment 3. Finally, the Board approved Vincent Balzano (ME) to the Menhaden Advisory Panel.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to continue the management of cast nets under the bycatch provision until implementation of Amendment 3.

Motion made by Mr. Estes and seconded by Mr. Alexander. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to appoint Vincent Balzano to the Menhaden Advisory Panel.

Motion approved by consensus.

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2017)

Press Releases

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Regional Management for 2017 Recreational Summer Flounder Fisheries

Alexandria, VA –The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan, maintaining regional management for the 2017 recreational summer flounder fishery. Specifically, the Addendum requires a one-inch increase in size limit and reduced possession limits to stay within the 2017 recreational harvest limit (RHL). These measures are broadly applied across all states to reduce harvest and provide for more coastwide consistency in regulations. The summer flounder regions, which are continued from 2016, are: Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New York; New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina.

In August 2016, the Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved an approximate 30% reduction in catch limits for both the commercial and recreational fisheries in response to the 2016 stock assessment update, which indicated the resource is experiencing overfishing but is not overfished. In order to not exceed the reduced 2017 RHL, a 41% reduction relative to the 2016 preliminary harvest estimates is needed. To achieve the reduction, the Addendum implements a one-inch increase in size limit from 2016 measures for all regions with the exception of North Carolina. Additionally, all regions are required to constrain their possession limits to 4 fish or less and maintain 2016 season lengths. The approved management program also allows for the continuation of the Delaware Bay specific management measures for New Jersey anglers west of the COLREGS line. In 2016, New Jersey had separate management measures for anglers east and west of the Delaware Bay COLREGS line.

“The Board’s decision took into account the findings of the 2015 and 2016 stock assessment updates, both of which found summer flounder abundance is declining and is experiencing overfishing; the need to take harvest reductions to end overfishing immediately through our joint management process with the Mid-Atlantic Council and as prescribed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act; and with the recognition that the confidence intervals around the harvest estimates limit our ability to precisely project the impacts of differing management measures,” stated Mike Luisi, Board Chair. “By our action, we struck a balance between the need to reduce harvest, while taking into account the socioeconomic impacts to our stakeholders. “

In its report to the Board, the Technical Committee (TC) supported the 2013 summer flounder benchmark stock assessment and its updates through 2016 as the best available science. Further, it agreed with the findings of the recent stock assessments, indicating the resource is declining in abundance and that associated management changes are needed to address this issue; in this case, a reduction in the RHL. The TC recommended uniform adjustments from 2016 management measures (as were approved in the Addendum) to reduce harvest and fishing mortality in an equitable manner.

Once the states have selected final management measures, the Commission will submit a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing how the measures will constrain fishing to the 2017 RHL. The Commission annually submits this letter as part of the conservation equivalency process that allows for federal coastwide management measures to be waived and for state management measures to be applied in both state and federal waters.

Addendum XXVIII will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-04

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Scup Draft Addendum XXIX for Public Comment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Draft Addendum XXIX to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes shortening the length of the commercial scup summer period and extending length of the winter period(s) to better allocate the commercial quota, which has been under-harvested since 2011. The quota allocation for each period is not being altered.

The Draft Addendum was initiated jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to address concerns raised by Advisory Panel members that commercial landings have been lower than the annual limits in recent years and the quota periods could be better utilized. The changes are intended to allow higher possession limits for a longer period of time each year, thus increasing the likelihood the commercial fishery will fully harvest the quota. The Draft Addendum proposes changes to the three scup commercial quota periods (Winter I, Summer, and Winter II), specifically a change in the start and end dates for the Summer Period. The options propose to shorten the summer period by 31 or 46 days.

The Draft Addendum also proposes options to continue allowing state permitted fishermen to begin fishing early in state waters when the Winter I quota closes prior to April 15. These options include extending the number of days the earlier fishing can occur as well as the start date when earlier fishing can occur. Allowing access prior to the start of the Summer period state permitted fishermen provides access to the resource when scup are highly available to nearshore (state) fisheries.

The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by February 10. It is anticipated some states will be conducting public hearings; the details of those

hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Board will review submitted public comment and consider final action on the Draft Addendum at the Commission's Spring Meeting in May. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-05

Motions

Move to postpone Addendum XXVIII until confirmation of a new Secretary of Commerce and NOAA Fisheries can submit new regulations directly to the federal register.

Motion made by Mr. Baum and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion fails (Roll call Vote: In Favor – NJ, DE; Opposed – MA, RI, CT, NY, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, USFWS, NMFS).

Main Motion

Move to approve Option 5 (More Coastwide Consistency) from Section 3.2 with the removal of the following language: Of particular note, Option 5 is calculated to achieve a 28-32% coastwide reduction (depending on the sub-option), less than the required reduction of 41% that Options 1-4 are designed to address.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Gates.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to adopt Option 2, revised by substituting “one-inch minimum size increase” with “30% reduction.” As revised, the option will require the regions of MA, RI, DE-VA, and NC to enact management measures for 2017 aimed at achieving a 30% reduction in harvest relative to 2016, and require the region of CT-NY and the region of NJ to enact management measures for 2017 aimed at achieving a 43% reduction in harvest relative to 2016, and that states within a region may adopt mode- or area-specific regulations as long as they are afforded to all states in the region.

Motion made by Mr. Ballou and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion fails (2 in favor, 8 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to approve Option 5 (More Coastwide Consistency) from Section 3.2 with the removal of the following language: Of particular note, Option 5 is calculated to achieve a 28-32% coastwide reduction (depending on the sub-option), less than the required reduction of 41% that Options 1-4 are designed to address.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Gates. Motion carries (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – CT, NY, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC; Opposed – MA, RI, NJ; Abstentions – USFWS, NMFS).

Main Motion

Move to approve Section 3.3 Timeframe Option 2 for 2017 with the ability to extend through 2018.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Batsavage.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute Section 3.3 Timeframe Option 1 for 2017.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion fails (4 in favor, 6 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to approve Section 3.3 Timeframe Option 2 for 2017 with the ability to extend through 2018.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Batsavage. Motion carries (8 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to approve Addendum XXVIII as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Clark.

Motion to Postpone

Move to postpone final action on Addendum XXVIII until the joint meeting in Kitty Hawk.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion fails (2 in favor, 10 opposed).

Main Motion

Move to approve Addendum XXVIII as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – MA, CT, NY, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, USFWS, NMFS).

Move to approve Addendum XXIX for public comment.

Motion made by Mr. Heins and seconded by Mr. Nowalsky. Motion carries unanimously.

ATLANTIC STRIPED MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2017)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Initiates Development of Draft Addendum V to Liberalize Management Measures

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum V to Amendment 6 to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to consider liberalizing coastwide commercial and recreational regulations. The Board’s action responds to concerns raised by Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions regarding continued economic hardship endured by its stakeholders since the implementation of Addendum IV and information from the 2016 assessment update indicating fishing mortality is below the target.

Addendum IV, implemented for the 2015 fishing season, required coastwide harvest reductions to reduce fishing mortality (F) to a level at or below the target. Specifically, coastal fisheries implemented measures to reduce harvest by 25% compared to 2013 levels, and Chesapeake Bay fisheries implemented measures to reduce harvest by 20.5% compared to 2012 levels. Additionally, an objective of Addendum IV is to protect the 2011 year class.

According to the results of the 2016 stock assessment update, the Atlantic striped bass stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Furthermore, Addendum IV successfully reduced fishing mortality to a level below the target (F in 2015 is estimated at 0.16), and length-frequency data from the catch in 2015 indicates a strong presence of the 2011 year class which is anticipated to join the coastal spawning population this year.

A draft of the addendum will be presented for Board review in May. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR17-06

Motions

Main Motion

Move to initiate an addendum to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan that considers a relaxation of the coastwide commercial and recreational regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the 2016 stock assessment update.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly.

Motion to Postpone

Motion to postpone until the May meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Train and seconded by Mr. White. Motion fails (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, PA, USFWS, NMFS; Opposed – CT, NJ, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA, NC; Null – NY).

Main Motion

Move to initiate an addendum to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan that considers a relaxation of the coastwide commercial and recreational regulations to bring fishing mortality to the target based on the 2016 stock assessment update.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion passes (Roll Call Vote: In Favor – CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, DC, PRFC, VA; Opposed – ME, NH, MA, RI, PA, USFWS, NMFS; Null – NC).

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2017)

Meeting Summary

Cobia PID

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board met to review public comment on the Public Information Document (PID) for the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Cobia and review the Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports.

Five public hearings were held throughout the Southeast during December 2016. Public hearings were attended by 60 non-staff participants and 16 written comments were submitted. Two issues that notably dominated concerns expressed about cobia management were the characterization of the recreational fishery by landings estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) and the Atlantic Migratory Group (AMG) cobia stock definition (Georgia north).

The public expressed mixed opinions on a complementary management plan between the Commission and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), with supporters of complementary management focusing on the flexibility of state management through the Commission and detractors focusing on disagreement in the management unit and inability of the Commission to change allowable catch limits (ACL). The public expressed that objectives and goals of the management plan should include: long-term sustainability of the stock, state flexibility, prioritizing the recreational fishery, improved data collection, and a long-term management regime that would strive to avoid closures and make management changes, when necessary, in a fashion that would provide stakeholders an opportunity to plan for such changes. There was general supported state-by-state allocation options. The public expressed support for size and bag limits for the recreational fishery, definition of state *de minimis* qualifications, and maintenance of commercial bycatch provisions.

The South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel (AP) expressed support for development of a complementary FMP between the Commission and SAFMC. The AP provided similar comments to those of the public with respect to long-term management objectives that would avoid annual mid-season changes or closures. The AP also supported the development of biological sampling requirements to improve data collection.

The Board discussed public comments on the issues presented in the PID. Much of the discussion focused on a need for “equitable access” to the fishery. The Board expressed support of fishery independent monitoring requirements and *de minimis* qualifications being included in the Draft FMP. A work group was populated to address allocation options for the Draft FMP.

The Board directed staff to move forward with the development of a complementary fishery management plan for AMG cobia. The Board requested analyses that include examination of size and bag limits, various state-by-state allocation scenarios, seasons, and other measures aimed at managing the fishery within the ACLs established by the SAFMC.

Red Drum Stock Assessment & Peer Review

The Board also reviewed the 2017 Red Drum Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports and approved them for management use. The reports indicate overfishing is not occurring for red drum in either the northern (North Carolina-New Jersey) or southern (South Carolina-Florida) stocks. The assessment estimates annual static spawning potential ratios (sSPR) measured against previously established sSPR reference points for red drum. Overfishing is occurring if the three-year average sSPR is less than a threshold of 30%, with a management target of 40% sSPR. sSPR is a measure of spawning stock biomass survival rates when fished at the current years fishing mortality rate relative to the spawning stock biomass survival rates if no fishing mortality was occurring. In the assessment’s terminal year of 2013, the three-year (2011-2013) average sSPR was 43.8% for the northern stock and 53.5% for the southern stock, both above the target and threshold values. The assessment was unable to determine an overfished/not overfished status because population abundance or biomass could not be reliably estimated due to limited available data for the older fish (ages 4+) that are not typically harvested due to the current fishery measures (the slot-limits).

Commercial harvests occur only from the northern stock with landings showing considerable fluctuation throughout the catch time series, and peaking in 1999 and 2013. Most of the commercial landings are caught using gill nets and beach seines, with North Carolina typically contributing over 90% of annual commercial landings.

The recreational fishery contributes the majority of total harvest for both stocks, in part because states in the southern portion of the fishery reserve red drum harvest strictly for recreational anglers. Recreational harvest of the northern stock has fluctuated throughout the time series from 1989-2013, with a large increase in harvest in 2013 and the majority of harvest occurring in North Carolina. Recreational discards from the northern stock have also fluctuated throughout the time series, though not always in conjunction with recreational harvest. An 8% mortality rate is assumed for recreational discards in both stocks.

Recreational harvest of the southern stock has shown a general increase throughout the time series with the majority of harvest occurring in Florida. Recreational discards from the southern stock generally increased throughout the time series, following similar fluctuations as recreational harvest.

The Board accepted the stock assessment and peer review report for management use. No management action was taken because reference points for red drum have already been established and overfishing is not occurring. A press release on the assessment results will be released on February 6.

Lastly, the Board accepted the 2016 Spot FMP Review and state compliance reports and approved Georgia's request for *de minimis*.

Please contact Dr. Louis Daniel at ldaniel@asmfc.org for information on cobia management and Mike Schmidtke, mschmidtke@asmfc.org for more information on the all other South Atlantic species.

Motions

Move to approve Deb Lambert to the Cobia Plan Development Team.

Motion made by Dr. McGovern and seconded by Dr. Laney. Motion passes without objection.

Motion to Postpone

Main Motion

Motion to postpone the approval of the stock assessment and peer review for management advice until the following tasks can be completed by the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee:

- Evaluate if current biological reference point types and values are appropriate for red drum given the specie's life history
- Investigate the feasibility of an F-based reference point for juvenile red drum
- Evaluate how red drum life history and fishery management measures affect the validity of age-based models
- Evaluate whether the South region continuity run of the statistical catch and age model can be made informative for management and, if yes, complete a continuity run
- Evaluate if a North region continuity run of the statistical catch at age model would be informative for management purposes and, if yes, complete a continuity run

- **Evaluate tag return rates for each region and determine if tag return data should be incorporated into a new run of the SS3 model**

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Ms. Fegley.

Motion to Substitute

Move to substitute to accept the Red Drum Stock Assessment as presented today for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion carries without objection.

Main Motion as Substituted

Move to accept the Red Drum Stock Assessment as presented today for management use.

Motion carries without objection.

Move to approve the 2016 Fishery Management Plan Review for Spot and approve *de minimis* status for Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. O'Reilly and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes without objection.