



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## ASMFC & MAFMFC Joint Meeting Webinar

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

ASMFC Bluefish and ISFMP Policy Boards & MAFMC  
June 8 & 10, 2021

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### Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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## **MAFMC and ASMFC Approve Bluefish Rebuilding Plan and Revised Allocations**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Bluefish Management Board (Board) jointly recommended approval of the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. The Amendment updates the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives, initiates a rebuilding plan, establishes new allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors, implements new commercial allocations to the states, revises the process for quota transfers between sectors, and revises how the management plan accounts for management uncertainty.

The Council and Board initiated the Amendment in December 2017 to consider revisions to the commercial and recreational fisheries allocations and the state-specific commercial allocations. In 2019, an operational stock assessment for bluefish indicated the stock was overfished, and the Council and Board subsequently decided to incorporate the rebuilding plan in the Amendment. During their joint meeting last week, the Council and Board reviewed a summary of the five virtual hearings and written comments submitted by 378 individuals and organizations, in addition to the recommendations of their joint Advisory Panel.

After weighing the pros and cons of shorter and longer rebuilding plan timeframes, the Council and Board ultimately selected the rebuilding plan which utilizes a constant fishing mortality approach and is projected to rebuild the stock in 7 years. Rebuilding progress will be analyzed through management track stock assessments every two years. The management track assessment [scheduled for later this month](#) will be the first step in informing specifications for the 2022-2023 fishing years.

The revised sector allocations increase the recreational allocation from 83% to 86% of the acceptable biological catch and decrease the commercial allocation from 17% to 14%. The Council and Board used catch data from 1981-2018 as the basis for sector allocations since it more accurately captures the cyclical nature of the fishery, while providing each sector with sufficient access to the resource considering historical usage.

The Council and Board based state commercial allocations on more recent data to improve efficiency within the commercial fishery and better reflect the current distribution of the stock. As such, the Amendment allocates a baseline quota of 0.1% to each state, and then allocates the rest of the commercial quota based on landings data from 2009 to 2018 (see Table 1 below). Recognizing that several states will be losing quota during a time when the coastwide commercial quota is already at an historic low, the Council and Board decided to phase-in the allocation changes over 7 years in order to reduce short-term economic impacts to the affected commercial fishing industry. The Council and Board also committed to reviewing the approved state allocations within 5 years.

**Table 1. Revised state allocation percentages of the bluefish commercial quota based on 2009-2018 landings data with a minimum default allocation of 0.1%. Previous allocations are provided for comparison purposes.**

State	Previous Allocations Under Amendment 1	Revised Allocations to be Phased in Over 7 Years
Maine	0.67%	0.11%
New Hampshire	0.41%	0.22%
Massachusetts	6.72%	10.12%
Rhode Island	6.81%	9.61%
Connecticut	1.27%	1.09%
New York	10.39%	19.76%
New Jersey	14.82%	13.85%
Delaware	1.88%	0.49%
Maryland	3.00%	1.92%
Virginia	11.88%	5.87%
North Carolina	32.06%	32.03%
South Carolina	0.04%	0.10%
Georgia	0.01%	0.10%
Florida	10.06%	4.78%

The Amendment also updates the sector transfer process to allow for quota transfers in either direction between the commercial and recreational sectors. Previously, quota could only be transferred from the recreational sector to the commercial fishery. The transfers will now be capped at 10% of the acceptable biological catch for a given year.

Finally, the Amendment modified the management uncertainty tool within the FMP to a sector-specific approach. It allows the Council and Board to apply a buffer to either sector, in the form of a quota reduction, to account for management uncertainty during specifications. While this tool has not been used often, the modified approach allows managers to better target areas of uncertainty within one sector without reducing the quota or harvest limit in the other sector.

As next steps, the Council will forward its recommended approval of the Amendment to NOAA Fisheries for final consideration and implementation. The Commission will consider final approval of the Amendment at its August meeting.

Additional information about this amendment is available at:  
<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/bluefish-allocation-amendment>

For more information, please contact:

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###

**Motions**

FMP Goals and Objectives

**Move to approve the proposed FMP Goals and Objectives as presented in the staff memo.**

Council: Duval/DiLernia (Motion carries by consent)

Board: Gilmore/Meserve (Motion carries by consent)

Motion carries

**Goal 1:** Conserve the bluefish resource through stakeholder engagement to maintain sustainable recreational fishing and commercial harvest.

**Objective 1.1:** Achieve and maintain a sustainable spawning stock biomass and rate of fishing mortality.

**Objective 1.2:** Promote practices that reduce ~~discard~~ **release** mortality within the recreational and commercial fishery.

**Objective 1.3:** Maintain effective coordination between the National Marine Fisheries Service, Council, Commission, and member states by promoting compliance and to support the development and implementation of management measures.

**Objective 1.4:** Promote compliance and effective enforcement of regulations.

**Objective 1.5:** Promote science, monitoring, and data collection that support and enhance effective ecosystem-based management of the bluefish resource.

**Goal 2:** Provide fair and equitable access to the fishery across all user groups throughout the management unit.

**Objective 2.1:** Ensure the implementation of management measures provides fair and equitable access to the resource across all **user** groups ~~along the coast~~ **within the management unit**.

**Objective 2.2:** Consider the economic and social needs and priorities of all groups that access the bluefish resource in the development of new management measures.

**Objective 2.3:** Maintain effective coordination with stakeholder groups to ensure optimization of economic and social benefits.

Rebuilding Plan

**Move to approve Alternative 4d (7-years), which utilizes a constant fishing mortality approach as a rebuilding plan.**

Board: Meserve/Borden

Council: Nowalsky/DiLernia

**Move to substitute Alternative 4c (5-years), which utilizes the Council's p\* approach as a rebuilding plan.**

Board: Ware/Patterson (6/9/0/1)

Council: Pentony/Bolen

Motion to substitute fails for lack of Board majority

**Return to the main motion:**

**Move to approve Alternative 4d (7-years), which utilizes a constant fishing mortality approach as a rebuilding plan.**

Board: 12/3/0/1

Council: 13/7/0

Motion carries

Commercial/Recreational Allocations

**Move to approve Alternatives 2a-3 and 2b-1, which includes an 87% recreational allocation and 13% commercial allocation with no phase-in.**

Board: Miller/Gary

Council: Nowalsky/Davidson

**Move to substitute to approve Alternative 2a-1: 83% recreational, 17% commercial, which is the status quo alternative.**

Council: Hemilright/Farnham

Board: Hasbrouck/Reid (2/12/2/0)

Motion to substitute fails for lack of Board majority

**Move to substitute to approve Alternative 2a-4 and 2b-1, which includes an 86% recreational allocation and 14% commercial allocation with no phase-in.**

Council: DiLernia/Cimino (15/4/1)

Board: Cimino/Madsen (13/0/1/2)

Motion to substitute carries

**Substitute becomes the main motion:**

**Move to approve Alternative 2a-4 and 2b-1, which includes an 86% recreational allocation and 14% commercial allocation with no phase-in.**

Board: Motion carries by consent with 1 abstention by NMFS

Council: Motion carries by consent with 1 abstention by NMFS

Motion carries

Commercial Allocations to the States

**Move to approve 3a-4 (81-89, 09-18), 3b-1 (no phase-in), 3c-1 (no trigger), and 3d-2 (0.10% minimum default allocation).**

Board: Haymans/Hart

Council: Bolen/Stormer

**Move to substitute 3a-3 (09-18), 3b-2 (phase-in), 3c-1 (no trigger), and 3d-2 (0.10% minimum default allocation).**

Board: Gilmore/Meserve (8/7/1/0)

Council: Cimino/Farnham (11/6/2)

Motion to substitute carries

**Substitute motion becomes the main motion**

**Move to approve 3a-3 (09-18), 3b-2 (phase-in), 3c-1 (no trigger), and 3d-2 (0.10% minimum default allocation).**

**Move to amend to include a review of the allocations to states in 5 years post-implementation.**

Board: Ware/Borden (12/3/1/0)

Council Davidson/DiLernia (17/2/1)

Motion to amend carries

**Amended motion becomes the main motion:**

**Move to approve 3a-3 (09-18) with a review of the allocations to states in 5 years post-implementation, 3b-2 (phase-in), 3c-1 (no trigger), and 3d-2 (0.10% minimum default allocation).**

Council: Motion carries by consent with 1 abstention by NMFS

Board: 12/3/1/0

Motion carries

#### Sector Transfers

**Move to approve Alternatives 5a-2 and 5b-2, which allows for bi-directional transfers and a 10% transfer cap.**

Council: Cimino/DiLernia (Motion carries by consent)

Board: Cimino/Meserve (Motion carries by consent)

Motion carries

#### Management Uncertainty

**Move to approve Alternative 6b for management uncertainty, which incorporates a management uncertainty buffer after the sector split.**

Council: Duval/DiLernia (18/1/0)

Board: Hasbrouck/Madsen (14/1/0/1)

Motion carries

#### De Minimis Provisions (Board only)

**I move to approve *de minimis* Alternative 7c (state-selected management measures).**

Board: Haymans/Bell (4/10/1/1)

Motion fails

**I move to approve *de minimis* Alternative 7a (status quo)**

Board: Patterson/Meserve (12/3/1/0)

Motion carries

#### Final Action

Council Motion:

**Move to submit the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment, with the identification of preferred alternatives selected today, to the National Marine Fisheries Service.**

deFur/Duval

Motion carries by consent with 1 abstention by NMFS

Board Motion:

**Move to recommend to the Commission the approval of the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment to the Bluefish Interstate Fishery Management Plan 2 as modified today. The effective date of any FMP modifications would be consistent with the effective date published in the final rule in the Federal Register.**

Gilmore/Patterson

Motion carries (Roll Call: In Favor – NY, MA, NC, NH, MD, RI, DE, ME, VA, CT, NJ, PRFC; Opposed – SC, GA, FL; Abstention: NOAA Fisheries).

## **ISFMP POLICY BOARD & MAFMC (June 8, 2021)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Interstate Fishery Management Plan Policy Board (Policy Board) met with the Council to receive an update on the [Recreational Reform Initiative](#). The presentation covered progress made to date and plans for future development of a Harvest Control Rule approach to setting recreational bag, size, and season limits for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. The NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator put forward a proposal for a harvest control rule alternative for further development by the Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team. The Council and Policy Board agreed that this proposal warrants further development.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director, at [tkerns@asmfc.org](mailto:tkerns@asmfc.org).

### ***Motions***

No motions made.