



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 2025 Summer Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 2025 Summer Meeting
August 5 - 7, 2025

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Board received presentations on on-demand gear research development at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Alternative Gear Marking Framework; updates from Maine and New Hampshire on recent meetings with the Gulf of Maine lobster industry; and an update on the 2025 benchmark stock assessment for lobster.

The NEFSC Gear Team has been studying new technologies for fishing gear without persistent buoy lines, also known as on-demand gear, to potentially provide fishermen opportunities to fish when persistent buoy lines are restricted. On-demand gear units can be set at the end of a trawl and released to the surface by a signal for retrieval. Instead of the location of the gear being marked at the surface by a buoy, digital technology is used to mark the gear location. A research fleet of over 70 vessels has conducted trials of various on-demand technologies, completing over 14,500 hauls since 2020 with an average success rate of 89%. Additional gear research is planned, including tests of new and developing systems and digital gear marking sharing technologies.

NOAA Fisheries presented updates on the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils' Joint Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment. The purpose of the action is to consider where and when to allow the use of fixed gear without a persistent buoy line, such as on-demand trap gear, as a possible approach for reducing entanglement risk for large whales. Final action by the Councils is planned for September and October. The Commission's American Lobster Advisory Panel (AP) met in July to discuss this issue. The AP raised concerns about the lack of information and engagement with the industry on the implementation of on-demand gear fisheries and, in particular, the potential for conflict with mobile gear. The Board agreed to recommend to the Commission that it send a letter to the two Councils and NOAA Fisheries recommending a delay in final action to allow more time to conduct outreach and gather input from the lobster industry on the process for approving alternative gear markings and application of ropeless fishing, which the ISFMP Policy Board approved later in the week.

As requested by the Board, Maine and New Hampshire reported out on their meetings with the lobster industry on potential management approaches for the Gulf of Maine. Maine Department of Marine Resources has held two rounds of meetings with its seven lobster Zone Councils and is conducting a survey of fishermen and dealers to better understand perceptions of the fishery and identify potential management approaches. New Hampshire has also held several meetings with commercial industry associations and is also developing a survey similar to Maine's. Results of these surveys and meetings will be presented to the Board at its October meeting.

The Stock Assessment Subcommittee Chair updated the Board on progress on the benchmark stock assessment for lobster. A peer-review workshop is scheduled for September 2-5 in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and the Board will consider the Assessment and Peer Review Reports in October.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move that the Lobster Board writes a letter to the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and GARFO with the following comments on the Alternative Gear Marking Framework:

- **The Lobster Board recommends a delay in final action as there has been insufficient outreach to the lobster and mobile gear industries. A delay would allow additional time to conduct the necessary outreach to industry and allow for these comments to be considered prior to final action.**
- **The Lobster Board is concerned that the process to approve alternative gear markings and on-demand technologies has not been described, nor is it clear how stakeholders will be engaged in these decisions.**
- **While the Lobster Board is often supportive of flexibility, there is significant concern about the broad application of ropeless, which is inconsistent with much of the messaging in NOAA's Ropeless Roadmap that ropeless gear will not be required everywhere.**
- **The Lobster Board recognizes there may be some value to modifications to current surface marking requirements (e.g., radar reflector requirements, ability to drop an endline); however, the potential application of ropeless gear everywhere significantly increases the breadth of impacted fishermen, establishes intermixing of traditional and ropeless fixed gear, and does not provide clarity to enforcement on where ropeless gear could be encountered.**

Motion made by Mr. Wilson and seconded by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by consent, with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The American Eel Board received an update on potential actions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and reviewed Maine's aquaculture plan for the 2026 fishing year.

The European Union has submitted a proposal to list American eel under Appendix II of CITES. This proposal will be considered at the upcoming Conference of the Parties (CoP), which will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from November 24 to December 5, 2025. Listing American eel under CITES Appendix II would require the US Fish and Wildlife Service to issue specific permits for any international trade in the species. The Board raised continued concerns about the potential negative impacts an Appendix II listing could have, in particular on the glass eel fishery given its heavy reliance on the international market. A Draft Resolution on Trade, Conservation and Management of Anguillid Eel Species will also be considered at the CoP. Such a resolution would be a non-binding agreement amongst the parties to take actions to improve knowledge, regional collaboration, enforcement, and other strategies to address trade-related threats to eel species. A Federal Register notice will be published this fall regarding potential CITES decisions to be considered at the 2025 CoP.

Addendum IV to the Fishery Management Plan for American Eel implemented a provision allowing states and jurisdictions to submit an aquaculture plan to allow for the limited harvest of American eel glass eels for use in domestic aquaculture. The Board has approved 200 pounds of glass eel aquaculture quota for Maine since 2019, which is allocated to the company American Unagi. The Technical Committee (TC) recommended approval of Maine's Aquaculture Plan for the 2026 fishing year, but noted that some harvest sites in Maine's proposal do not meet all selection criteria established under Addendum V. Following the TC recommendations, the Board approved Maine's Aquaculture Plan for the 2026 fishing year and tasked the TC with reviewing the aquaculture plan criteria in Addendum V to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the Maine Aquaculture Plan for 2026 and task the Technical Committee to review the aquaculture plan criteria in Addendum V to determine if changes to the language or interpretation of these criteria should be considered.

Motion made by Ms. Ware and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes by consent.

SCIAENIDS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2025)

Press Release

Sciaenids Board Approves Red Drum Draft Addendum II for Public Comment *Draft Addendum Considers Modifications to Red Drum Management*

Arlington, VA – The Commission's Sciaenids Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Red Drum for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers several changes to the management programs in the southern (South Carolina to Florida) and northern (New Jersey to North Carolina) regions in response to the findings of the 2024 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report.

Specifically, the assessment found the southern stock to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. As a result, the Draft Addendum considers two fishing mortality options states may not exceed in order to end overfishing. Although the northern stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing, the Board is concerned with an increasing trend in fishing mortality observed in the northern region. To address this trend, the Draft Addendum considers changes to the recreational bag and slot limits of states in the northern region, as well as provide states the opportunity to align their differing regulations, particularly in Chesapeake Bay.

The Draft Addendum also includes a process for states to propose management measures in response to the 2024 benchmark stock assessment, as well as future assessment advice. Further, the Draft Addendum proposes a process to allow states to submit stock status analyses conducted outside the Commission's stock assessment process to be considered for management use. Lastly, the Draft Addendum proposes updates to the management program's *de minimis* provisions. The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in its FMPs to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of the species.

A subsequent press release will provide the details of upcoming state public hearings and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the Addendum in October. For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org or 703.842.0723.

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PR25-19

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving the Draft Addendum for public comment (see above press release), the Sciaenids Management Board met to consider several items: Traffic Light Analysis (TLA) reports for spot and Atlantic croaker, a request from Delaware for an exemption to a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) requirement for its spot commercial fishery, and Fishery Management Plan Reviews and state compliance reports for red drum and Atlantic croaker.

The Board received a presentation on the findings of the 2025 TLAs, which were updated with data through 2024. The TLA assigns a color (red, yellow, or green) to categorize relative levels of indicators based on the condition of the fish population (abundance metric) or fishery (harvest metric). For example, as harvest or abundance increases relative to a reference period, the proportion of green in a given year will increase, indicating a positive condition. The Board evaluates the proportion of red against threshold levels to potentially trigger management action. In 2020, the TLAs for the 2019 fishing year indicated that both species triggered at the 30% red threshold. State implementation plans for management measures were approved in early 2021 and all new management measures were enacted by the end of 2021. The management measures enacted in 2021 for both species were due to be reevaluated based on the results of current updates of the TLAs.

Although harvest metrics for spot in the TLA triggered at the elevated 60% threshold, abundance metrics did not trigger at any threshold level in the final three years. In this case, Addendum III states the measures that were put into place in 2020 are no longer required for spot. However, the Board agreed with the Technical Committee's (TC) recommendation to maintain the current spot management measures. This decision was due in part to continued concern with low spot commercial and recreational harvest and results from a benchmark stock assessment expected in the next couple of years.

For Atlantic croaker, an abundance metric exceeded the 30% threshold in three of the four terminal years. Addendum III states, in this case, the TC must evaluate trends in the stock's abundance to recommend to the Board whether triggered measures should remain in place or more restrictive measures should be considered. The Board agreed with the TC's recommendation to maintain the current management measures, due to the abundance metrics not deteriorating further to the 60% threshold level and anticipation of results from the ongoing benchmark stock assessment within the next year.

The Board reviewed and approved a request from Delaware for an exemption from a requirement in Addendum III to make changes to its spot commercial fishery, until the Board develops new *de minimis* criteria. The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in its FMPs to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation

of a species. In 2024, Delaware did not request *de minimis* status for spot due to a trend of higher landings above the *de minimis* threshold but questioned the feasibility and usefulness of achieving the necessary 1% reduction in its commercial fishery where landings are already very low which the Board agreed with.

The Board reviewed and approved the 2024 Fishing Year FMP Reviews and state compliance reports for red drum and Atlantic croaker. For red drum, *de minimis* status was approved for New Jersey and Delaware. For Atlantic croaker, *de minimis* status was approved for New Jersey (commercial and recreational), Delaware (commercial), South Carolina (commercial), and Georgia (commercial).

As a result of the discussion on *de minimis* criteria for Atlantic croaker, spot, and red drum, the Board tasked the Plan Review Teams for all Sciaenids Board species (i.e., spot, Atlantic croaker, red drum, black drum, and spotted seatrout) to review and make recommendations for the *de minimis* criteria for these species. The Board expressed concern whether the current 1% threshold for a state to be considered *de minimis* was appropriate, and whether there may be alternate ways to evaluate whether a state is *de minimis*. The Board also noted some Sciaenids Board species still consider *de minimis* for the recreational and commercial sectors as a whole, instead of separately like Atlantic croaker. The Plan Review Teams will review the current *de minimis* criteria for all Sciaenids Board species and will report back to the Board at a later meeting on results and recommendations.

For more information, please contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to remove Section 3.4 Option D from consideration in Draft Addendum II

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion approved with no objections.

Move to remove Section 3.5 sub-option b1 from consideration in Draft Addendum II

Motion made by Ms. Burgess and seconded by Mr. Woodward. Motion passes by consent.

Move to approve Red Drum Draft Addendum II as modified today for public comment.

Motion made by Dr. Rhodes and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion carries by consent.

Move to approve Delaware's request for an exemption from the Spot FMP's requirement that Delaware reduce its spot commercial landings by 1% until the Board develops new *de minimis* criteria.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion carries by consent.

Move to approve the Red Drum FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year as amended today, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for New Jersey and Delaware.

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion carries by consent.

Move to approve the Atlantic Croaker FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for New Jersey, Delaware, South Carolina, and Georgia commercial fisheries and New Jersey's recreational fishery.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion passes by consent.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AUGUST 6, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to discuss several issues, including reviewing the Discussion Paper on Declared Interests and Voting Privileges, a legislative update, a CARES update and a future annual meeting locations update. The following action items resulted from the Committee's discussions:

- A lengthy discussion was held on the *Discussion Paper on Establishing and Reviewing Declared Interests*. It was decided that a work group was needed to flesh out this paper to further frame the Executive Committee discussion.
- Staff presented an update on the President's FY26 Proposed Budget, the Senate's FY26 Commerce Justice and Science Appropriations Bill, and the House's FY26 Commerce Justice and Science Appropriations Bill, highlighting the differences between the three documents. He also provided a brief update on the SHARKED Act and the Sportfish Restoration Reauthorization Bill.
- Staff provided an update on the status of the remaining issues with New Jersey and Florida CARES payments due to be repaid after audits found funds made some more than whole or they were ineligible to receive any funds at all.
- Staff provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations. October 26-30, 2025 the Annual Meeting will be in Dewey Beach, Delaware; in 2026 Rhode Island; 2027 South Carolina; 2028 Massachusetts; 2029 Pennsylvania, 2030 Georgia and 2031 Connecticut.

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

Motions

Move the Executive Committee set a working group to further develop suggestions to the declared interest policy and voting privileges with two Executive Committee members (or their designees) from each region.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded Mr. Green. Motion passes (12 in favor, 2 opposed).

SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Shad and River Herring Management Board met to review the Advisory Panel (AP) report on the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Stock Assessment and consider updates to the Sustainable Fishery Management Plans (SFMP) for Massachusetts (river herring) and Georgia (American shad),

as well as updates to the Alternative Management Plans (AMPs) for Georgia (river herring) and Florida (shad and river herring).

The Board reviewed the AP report on the 2024 River Herring Benchmark Assessment, which also included comments on Atlantic Herring Amendment 10 that at the time was being developed at the New England Fishery Management Council which was removed from the Council workload priority list for 2025. Overall, AP members were concerned that river herring populations are not recovering despite the actions taken through Amendment 2 that resulted in the closure of most state fisheries. The AP discussed the contrast in the assessment results between Northern New England and Southern New England, particularly considering that the report notes both regions have significant restoration programs. The AP provided a number of recommendations including requesting a TC task to evaluate different commercial fishery management strategies, prioritizing genetic sampling of at-sea bycatch, and supporting further development of management actions in the Atlantic herring fishery to reduce bycatch. The Board did not initiate any further action or TC tasking at this time.

SFMPs for American shad and river herring are required for all states and jurisdictions that have a commercial fishery under Amendment 2 (river herring) and Amendment 3 (American shad) to the Shad and River Herring FMP. Plans are updated and reviewed by the Technical Committee every five years.

In Massachusetts, the SFMP update proposed opening harvest in Herring Brook in the Town of Pembroke. The proposed fishery would be capped at 10% of the time series mean (since 2012) of the annual spawning run count, recalculated every three years. If the 10% cap is exceeded in any year, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will meet with the Pembroke Herring Fisheries Commission to review harvest records and management practices in a joint memorandum. Additionally, if the Herring Brook run count is below the 25th percentile for two consecutive years, the sustainability target will be reduced to 5% of the time series mean for the following year. Three consecutive years with the run count below the 25th percentile of the time series will trigger a minimum three-year closure the following year. In order to reopen the harvest, an opening threshold of three consecutive years above the time series mean would have to occur. The Board approved the SFMP as presented.

In Georgia, there were no significant changes to the updated SMFP except to update the benchmarks for management triggers to include data through 2023. Additionally, due to funding, the Ogeechee River creel survey will be suspended. Abundance data will still be collected, and the management trigger is still maintained by the electrofishing survey. The Board approved the SFMP as presented.

There were no proposed changes in the updated AMPs from Florida and Georgia. In Georgia, the AMP maintains a trigger to develop an SFMP or pursue regulatory change if any creel surveys indicate positive harvest of river herring for three consecutive years, and the Florida AMP maintains a trigger to re-evaluate the sustainability of a system if any source detects a non-zero harvest of blueback herring or American shad outside of the St. John's River. The Board approved both AMPs as presented.

Finally, the Board elected Ron Owens from Potomac River Fisheries Commission as Vice-Chair. For more information contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the updated River Herring Sustainable Fishery Management Plan from Massachusetts, Shad Sustainable Fishery Management Plan and River Herring Alternative Management Plan from Georgia, and the Shad and River Herring Alternative Management Plan from Florida, as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion approved by consent.

Move to elect Ron Owens as Vice-Chair.

Motion made by Mr. Maniscalco and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion passes by consent.

WEAKFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Weakfish Management Board met to consider the 2025 Weakfish Stock Assessment Update and elect a vice-chair.

The Weakfish Board received a presentation on the 2025 Weakfish Stock Assessment Update. The Assessment Update incorporated data through 2023 into the statistical catch-at-age model used in the 2016 benchmark and 2019 assessment update. The report on the update included additional work by the Weakfish Technical Committee (TC) to investigate a prior assumption in the model, potentially leading to an underestimation of natural mortality in recent years. The extent of the work needed to resolve this issue with model performance is beyond the scope of an assessment update. As a result, the Board accepted the TC's recommendation to not use this update for management and agreed a new benchmark assessment should be initiated in 2026 and completed in 2028. Although there were some positive signs observed in the fishery-independent and -dependent data in this assessment update, the TC believes the status has not likely changed significantly since the last assessment update in 2019. The Board agreed with the TC's recommendation that management changes are not warranted at this time. The Assessment Update can be found at <https://asmfc.org/resources/stock-assessment/weakfish-stock-assessment-update-2025/>

Lastly, the Board elected Erika Burgess of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as the Weakfish Board Vice-Chair. For more information, contact Tracey Bauer, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at tbauer@asmfc.org or 703.842.0723.

Motions

Move to elect Erika Burgess as the Vice-Chair of the Weakfish Management Board.

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and second by Mr. Clark. Motion approved by consent

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2025)

Press Release

Atlantic Striped Bass Board Approves Addendum III for Public Comment *Draft Addendum Considers Further Fishery Reductions*

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum III to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Draft Addendum considers management measures to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. The Draft Addendum will also address requirements for commercial tagging programs, a coastwide definition of total length for size limit regulations, and changes to the Maryland recreational season baseline.

The Board initiated the Draft Addendum in response to stock projections indicating a low probability of meeting the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. The most recent stock projections estimate an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 due to the above average 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit. There is also concern about the lack of strong year-classes behind the 2018 year-class.

This proposed action is intended to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by reducing fishery removals by 12% with management measures implemented in 2026. For the commercial fishery, the Draft Addendum proposes a commercial quota reduction. For the recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum considers season closures and/or size limit changes. For Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum also proposes changing the recreational baseline season to simplify Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay regulations, which could improve compliance and enforcement, and to re-align fishing access based on stakeholder input and release mortality rates.

For commercial tagging, the FMP currently allows states to choose whether to tag commercially harvested fish at the point of harvest or point of sale. To address concerns that waiting to tag harvested fish until the point of sale could increase the risk of illegal harvest, the Draft Addendum considers requiring commercial tagging at the point of harvest or first point of landing intended to improve enforcement and compliance.

There is also concern that inconsistent methods of measuring the total length of striped bass for compliance with size limits undermines the intended conservation, consistency, and enforceability of the coastwide size limits. To address this, the Draft Addendum considers coastwide requirements for defining total length for both sectors.

The Draft Addendum will be posted to the website in late August at <https://asmfc.org/actions/atlantic-striped-bass-draft-addendum-iii-2026-measures-to-support-rebuilding/>. A subsequent press release will provide the details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in October 2025 at the Commission’s Annual Meeting in Dewey Beach, DE.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR25-20

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Draft Addendum III for public comment, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to receive a report on the ten-year review of commercial tagging programs and consider the draft Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for fishing year 2024.

The Board received a report on the ten-year review of the commercial tagging program. In August 2024, the Board tasked the Plan Review Team (PRT) with reviewing the striped bass commercial tagging program since it has been over a decade since program implementation through the FMP. The PRT and state commercial tagging contacts met in July 2025 to provide overviews of each state's tagging program, share information and best practices among states, discuss key observations across programs, and streamline reporting. A written report of those discussions is being developed in August 2025. The Board requested that the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) meet prior to the 2025 Annual Meeting, if possible, to review the report and discuss any further LEC recommendations on point of tagging and potential improvements to state tagging programs.

Finally, the Board approved the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year and state compliance reports. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year and state compliance reports.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion approved by unanimous consent

Move to remove the 18% reduction option in Section 3.4 (Option D & E)

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes (13 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.4 Option C (0% commercial reduction and -14% recreational reduction).

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion pass (8 in favor, 6 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the ocean.

Motion made by Mr. Gary and seconded by Mr. Gates. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend to include “with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated” at the end of the sentence

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes (9 in favor, 6 opposed, 1 null).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the Ocean with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated

Motion passes (12 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 null).

Main Motion

Move to remove in Section 3.4 option B: options CB2, CB3, CB5.

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

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to remove “CB3”

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes (14 in favor, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.4 option B: options CB2 and CB5.

Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the Chesapeake Bay with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion passes (12 in favor, 4 opposed).

Move to add an option for tagging at first point of landing in Section 3.2

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion

Move to remove in Section 3.3 Option D (25% uncertainty buffer for the Maryland season baseline).

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

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to add “and Option B (MD baseline with no buffer)” to the end of the sentence.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion fails (4 in favor, 8 opposed, 4 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.3 Option D (25% uncertainty buffer for the Maryland season baseline).

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes (10 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstentions).

Move to approve Draft Addendum III for public comment as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board met to discuss tasking the Technical Committee (TC) in response to the report from the Work Group on Precautionary Management in Chesapeake Bay (Work Group) and review a progress update on the ecological reference point (ERP) benchmark stock assessment.

In May 2025, the Board reviewed the [Work Group report](#), which discussed a number of precautionary management options that the Board could consider for further action based on the life history of certain predators, the nature of Chesapeake Bay menhaden fisheries, and recent changes in menhaden availability. The Work Group addressed its task without determining if there is or is not an adequate supply of menhaden to support predatory demand in the Bay; instead, it is the responsibility of the Board to determine if or when it is necessary to implement them. In response, the Board met to consider potential tasks for the TC to further evaluate the issues discussed in the report.

The Board discussed coastwide changes in menhaden availability and changing environmental conditions, as well as recent temporal shifts in menhaden harvest in Chesapeake Bay. In consideration of the priority for the TC and ERP Work Group to complete the single-species assessment update and ERP benchmark assessment for presentation to the Board at the Annual Meeting, the Board decided to discuss potential TC tasks regarding coastwide changing environmental conditions at the Annual Meeting.

Regarding Chesapeake Bay, Maryland presented its recent declining bait harvest along with data from the Board Work Group report that showed an increase in reduction fishery effort in the summer months and decreasing pound net harvests and CPUEs from the jurisdictions within the Bay. In order to alleviate a concentration of effort that may be affecting other fisheries within the Bay, as well as other potential ecological impacts, Maryland proposed a task to draft a white paper of options to establish quota periods that would distribute harvest of the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap throughout the fishing season. Additionally, given the nature of the task is to resolve a policy issue, rather than a scientific one, the proposal would assign the task to a Plan Development Team (PDT), as opposed to the TC. The Board elected to form a PDT to develop options for distributing the Chesapeake Bay reduction cap more evenly throughout the fishing season with the intent of reviewing those options at the 2026 Winter Meeting to consider initiating a management document.

The Board received a progress report on the ERP benchmark stock assessment. The ERP benchmark assessment, including the new base estimate of natural mortality for the single-species model will be peer-reviewed through the SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) process in August 2025.

For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to task a Plan Development Team to develop options for distributing harvest of the Chesapeake Bay reduction cap more evenly throughout the Chesapeake Bay reduction season in order to mitigate potential effort bottlenecks that may be impacting other Bay small scale fisheries as well as the Bay ecosystem. The intent is for a draft document to come to the board at the 2026 Winter Meeting.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Mr. Bell. Motion passes (14 in favor, 2 opposed, 2 abstentions).

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 7, 2025)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive a report from the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee summary); consider approval of the *Conservation Equivalency: Policy and Technical Guidance Document*; review a discussion paper on establishing and reviewing declared interests; discuss a process for bringing nature-friendly fishing gear and bait alternatives to a board; review a report from the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP); and consider a request from the American Lobster Management Board.

The Policy Board approved revisions to the *Conservation Equivalency: Policy and Technical Guidance Document*, which was approved in October 2023, to reflect current application of conservation equivalency (CE) in Commission fishery management plans and provide new guidance on the use of CE. Clarification and guidance were needed on some of the 2023 directives in the document. Upon reviewing the revised document, including previously suggested changes by Policy Board members, the Policy Board approved the revised document, which will be posted to the ASMFC website next week. The new guidance includes clarity under what stock conditions CE can be used, the process for states to request information from technical committees and plan review teams for state CE plans, and a post-stock assessment evaluation process.

The Commission's Executive Committee has discussed a series of procedures and practices at the past few quarterly meetings. These discussions were prompted by several circumstances, including changing distribution and residency of many species managed by the Commission, which in turn has resulted in (and is anticipated to result in additional) interest by states to alter their participation on one or more species boards. Earlier in the week, the Executive Committee had a lengthy discussion on the *Discussion Paper on Establishing and Reviewing Declared Interests* (how to determine what state/jurisdiction resides on a species management board). It was decided that a work group was needed to flesh out this paper to further frame the Executive Committee discussion.

During public comment at the May 2025 Horseshoe Crab Management Board meeting, the concept of biodegradable bait bags and bait pucks was introduced. Questions were raised on how ideas brought to a board's attention could be evaluated. The Policy Board agreed that for ideas that still need additional testing, such as this one, those ideas would need to be fleshed out with a state or the fishing industry to have a final concept to bring back to a Board. In order for a Board to consider including the idea in a fishery management plan, a Board member would need to sponsor the concept for Board consideration.

The ACFHP report highlighted recent developments and accomplishments of the partnership. The America's Conservation Enhancement Act was reauthorized in December 2024, improving funding flexibility, reducing non-federal match burdens, and officially designating all 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships, including ACFHP. ACFHP finalized its [2025–2026 Conservation Action Plan](#) in June, emphasizing restoration, SAV science, equitable funding access, outreach, and data-driven project selection. Recent completed projects include dam removals and fish passage improvements in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Maine, and oyster restoration in Maryland. For FY2025, ACFHP received \$306,000 in funding to support operations and two habitat restoration projects in Florida and Massachusetts. Five additional projects have been recommended for FY2026, aiming to restore or reconnect 15 acres and over 31 miles of priority fish habitat.

Lastly, the Commission agreed to send a letter to New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office on the Alternative Gear Marking Framework (See American Lobster Board summary for details).

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, Fisheries Policy Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the Conservation Equivalency document as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Grist. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

On behalf of the American Lobster Board, move the Commission send a letter to the New England Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and GARFO with the following comments on the Alternative Gear Marking Framework:

- **The Lobster Board recommends a delay in final action as there has been insufficient outreach to the lobster and mobile gear industries. A delay would allow additional time to conduct the necessary outreach to industry and allow for these comments to be considered prior to final action.**
- **The Lobster Board is concerned that the process to approve alternative gear markings and on-demand technologies has not been described, nor is it clear how stakeholders will be engaged in these decisions.**
- **While the Lobster Board is often supportive of flexibility, there is significant concern about the broad application of ropeless, which is inconsistent with much of the messaging in NOAA's Ropeless Roadmap that ropeless gear will not be required everywhere.**
- **The Lobster Board recognizes there may be some value to modifications to current surface marking requirements (e.g., radar reflector requirements, ability to drop an endline); however, the potential application of ropeless gear everywhere significantly increases the breadth of impacted fishermen, establishes intermixing of traditional and ropeless fixed gear, and does not provide clarity to enforcement on where ropeless gear could be encountered.**

Motion made by Ms. Zobel on behalf of the American Lobster Management Board. Motion approved by unanimous consent.