



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

ASMFC 2026 Summer Meeting

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC 2026 Summer Meeting
August 4-6, 2026

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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ATLANTIC HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Management Board met to review the 2025 Research Track and 2026 Management Track stock assessments and receive an update from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC).

The [2025 Research Track Stock Assessment](#) was conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and was completed in February 2025. A peer review followed in March 2025 and the panel found all terms of reference were met and methods accepted. Notably, the Research Track transitioned the stock to the Woods Hole Assessment Model (WHAM). The [2026 Management Track Stock Assessment](#) then applied the new model to determine stock status and was completed by the NEFSC in June 2026. The following [peer review](#) found all terms of reference were met except for the projections term of reference, which was considered partially met. Similar to prior assessments, there is continued concern that the projections are overly optimistic. The Board noted the next steps to inform 2027 management will first occur through the NEFMC process with the NEFMC Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team and Scientific and Statistical Committee considering various projection sensitivity runs. The Board also noted the importance of taking actionable steps to address the research recommendations, including the integration of state and federal surveys to provide more information on age-1 Atlantic herring. The Board accepted the 2025 Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review for management use.

The Board received an update from the NEFMC on its upcoming Atlantic herring actions. In June 2026, the NEFMC voted to separate Atlantic herring specifications for fishing years 2027-2031 into a standalone action distinct from ongoing work to consider measures to minimize catch of river herring and shad in the Atlantic herring fishery. The NEFMC plans to take final action on 2027-2031 specifications at its September 2026 meeting. In the separate action, the NEFMC directed its Atlantic Herring Plan Development Team to continue working on time-area closures for river herring and shad, an updated specifications process for Atlantic herring, and carryover provision modifications, with final action targeted for April 2027.

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

Motions

Move to accept the 2025 Research Track Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use.

Motion made by Mr. Kane and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Board met to consider a number of issues: an update from the Management Objectives Process Steering Committee (SC); a conservation equivalency proposal for Lobster Conservation Management Area (LCMA) 5; reports from Maine and Massachusetts on recent

industry meetings with the Gulf of Maine lobster industry; and an update from NOAA Fisheries on the Request for Information (RFI) on alternative gear marking.

In May, the Board formed an SC to develop a process to define management objectives for the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) fishery. The SC includes representation from the Board, Technical Committee, Commission staff, the Commission's Committee on Economics and Social Sciences, and industry stakeholders. The SC met in June to review existing management objectives established in Amendment 3 and subsequent addenda and discuss gaps in the objectives considering the current GOM/GBK stock status, and social/economic conditions facing the fishery today. The SC will meet two more times to develop recommendations for a management objectives process to identify new management objectives across all stakeholders and identify potential management tools. A final report is expected to be delivered to the Board in November.

The Board also approved a CE proposal to modify the lobster fishery season closure in LCMA 5 (inshore and offshore Mid-Atlantic) to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31. The proposal was submitted by the Lobster Conservation Management Team (LCMT) for LCMA 5 with the intent of allowing LCMA 5 lobster permit holders to target black sea bass earlier in the season. The Technical Committee indicated this change is not expected to increase lobster mortality. The Board noted that the federal regulations will need to be revised to allow for the recommended changes to take effect for fishermen who hold a federal lobster permit.

Maine reported on recent meetings with stakeholders to identify potential management approaches for the Gulf of Maine. Maine held meetings earlier this year with its seven Lobster Zone Councils and Lobster Advisory Council to discuss management measures and conservation efforts. In June, the Lobster Advisory Council voted to recommend increasing the size of the required biological escape panel to 4.5 by 6 inches to allow more escapement of larger lobsters. They recommended that harvesters be given two years to come into compliance with the larger panel requirement. This proposal will be discussed at the next round of Lobster Zone Council meetings later this year and the Maine Department of Marine Resources will consider subsequent rulemaking in response to those discussions. Massachusetts reported that the state is in the process of reconstituting its LCMT membership.

The Board received an update from NOAA Fisheries on the RFI published on July 16, 2026, to gather additional information on ropeless gear and visualization technology. The RFI seeks information from fishery participants and others with specialized knowledge on the potential use of ropeless fishing gear to better inform stakeholder input and Council decision-making regarding the development of the Joint New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils' Alternative Gear Marking Framework Adjustment. Specifically, this RFI requests information specific to the program design, utility, limitations, and technical capability of ropeless fishing. Comments will be accepted until October 14, 2026 and can be submitted electronically via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NOAA-NMFS-2026-2080-0001>.

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

Motions

Move to approve the conservation equivalency (CE) proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to add “Jonah crab” after lobster.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Ms. Madsen. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to approve the CE proposal for LCMA 5 and that the Commission send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion carries by consent with one abstention (NOAA Fisheries).

WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Winter Flounder Board met to receive an update from the Technical Committee (TC) on two Board requests; receive an overview of the New England Fishery Management Council’s groundfish specification process; and review a report from the TC on a Board tasking to evaluate increasing the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) recreational bag limit from 2 to 4 fish.

The TC presented an informational update on a request from the Board on the utilization of catch limits in federal waters. A comparison of cumulative catch to the allocated annual catch limits for SNE/MA and Gulf of Maine winter flounder by year from 2011-2025 showed very low utilization rates for both stocks.

The Board received an overview of the New England Fishery Management Council’s (Council) groundfish specification process to help the Board better understand the specification process, particularly how changes to state catch interacts with federal catch limits. The Council takes final action on all specification decisions, including an assumption of how much catch is assigned to state waters in future years (referred to as the state sub-component) prior to the Board’s discussion of state regulations. Commission and Council staff have discussed how to best address the disconnect between the Council’s and Board’s processes. Moving forward, the Board hopes to address the disconnect with improved communication and collaboration between the two groups. During a Council specifications setting year, Commission staff will keep the Board informed of all Council meetings. This will allow the Board to communicate to the Council if there is a need for changes to state measures, and therefore adjustment to the state sub-component prior to final action.

Commission staff will also inform the TC of Groundfish Plan Development Team meetings, particularly when the winter flounder state sub-components are discussed.

The TC presented a report addressing a Board tasking to assess the potential for increasing the SNE/MA recreational bag limit from 2 to 4 fish. The TC found the available SNE/MA winter flounder MRIP data have very high percent standard errors due to low intercepts throughout the time series, but particularly in the past 26 years. The TC also expressed concern that a higher bag limit would increase fishing effort. In turn, this increase could lead to localized depletion of winter flounder when they are concentrated in inshore state water spawning grounds, and would be expected to increase overall mortality on the stock. Although the SNE/MA winter flounder stock was considered rebuilt based on the 2022 management track assessment, this improved status was due to a change to how the stock status reference points were calculated, and does not reflect any positive change in stock status. SNE/MA spawning stock biomass continues to be estimated at time series lows. The Board agreed with the TC's recommendation to not increase the SNE/MA bag limit at this time.

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

Motions

No motions made.

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 4, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Tautog Management Board met to consider approval of Draft Addendum I for public comment and review updates to the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool based on Board feedback.

In response to the 2025 stock assessment update, which found overfishing is occurring in the New Jersey-New York Bight (NJ-NYB) and Delaware-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) regions, the Board initiated Draft Addendum I to consider options for harvest reductions in those regions that would provide a 50% probability of achieving the fishing mortality (F) target by 2030. Additionally, the Draft Addendum would present options to allow states to implement a second tag in the commercial harvest tagging program to provide more flexibility for harvesters in the live market. According to the Technical Committee projections, the NJ-NYB region would need a 40% reduction to have a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030, but in the DMV region, maintaining status quo removals (i.e., removals equal to the 2022-2024 average) would result in a 61% probability of being at or below the F target in 2030, meaning no reduction would be needed. For New York and New Jersey, the Draft Addendum provides options that contain a combination of modifications to the possession limits, season closures, and minimum size limits that would achieve the 40% reduction. In the DMV, options consider precautionary changes to reduce harvest or improve consistency between the state regulations in the region.

After reviewing the Draft Addendum, the Board discussed the potential impact on the necessary reductions with updated data, since harvest in New York and New Jersey in 2025 was lower than projected using 2022-2024 average removals. The Board considered delaying approving the Draft Addendum for public comment to include additional years of data while still implementing measures

before the start of the 2028 fishing year. Ultimately, the Board decided to delay the Draft Addendum to receive updated projections with the final 2025 data.

Additionally, as part of the potential modifications to New York's commercial fishery, the document contains options to change the possession limit in Long Island Sound, in addition to the NJ-NYB. This delay would provide additional time for the PDT to draft an option for Connecticut to implement a complementary possession limit to maintain consistency within the Long Island Sound region.

The Board received an update on the use of the Draft Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool for tautog management and discussed its general use for management with Commission FMPs. The Board provided guidance for the Risk and Uncertainty Decision Tool Work Group to consider the disconnect between the socioeconomic scores from the Board and CESS, particularly in the interpretation of long-term versus short-term impacts.

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

Motions

Move to add an option to section 3.1 LIS and NJ-NY Bight Proposed Commercial Management Measures of Draft Addendum I to allow Connecticut-permitted commercial vessels' possession limit to increase to 25 fish to align with New York permitted commercial vessels in the Long Island Sound.

Motion made by Mr. Hyatt and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2024-2026 (in the current MRIP currency) after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released. An option to allow the Board to take management action via Board action following the results of the Benchmark Assessment should be developed by the PDT. Board action can only be used if the upcoming Benchmark Assessment shows that Fishing Mortality needs to be reduced or that it can be liberalized by 10% or greater to have a 50% probability of achieving the F-target by 2030.

Motion made by Mr. Hornstein and seconded by Mr. Cimino. Motion divided.

Motion to Divide

Motion to divide the question.

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

Motion #1

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2024-2026 (in the current MRIP currency) after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to replace “2024-2026” to “2023-2025” and strike “after final 2026 MRIP estimates are released.”

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Glenn. Motion passes by unanimous consent

Amended Motion #1

Move that further action on Tautog Addendum I is postponed until projections to determine the reduction required to meet a 50% probability of achieving the F target in 2030 are updated using the most recent three-year average removals from 2023-2025 (in the current MRIP currency).

Motion passes (8 in favor, 1 opposed).

Motion #2

An option to allow the Board to take management action via Board action following the results of the Benchmark Assessment should be developed by the PDT. Board action can only be used if the upcoming Benchmark Assessment shows that Fishing Mortality needs to be reduced or that it can be liberalized by 10% or greater to have a 50% probability of achieving the F-target by 2030.

Motion fails (9 opposed).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to receive updates on legislation, CARES Act and future annual meeting locations.

- Staff provided an update on the current state of FY27 government funding, and efforts to approve a continuing resolution to extend the current FY26 budget into December 2026. He also provided a brief update on several other fishery bills focused on establishing eDNA research programs, red snapper fishery closures, and extending the North Atlantic right whale regulation pause.
- Staff provided an update on the CARES cooperative agreement. The Commission continues to try to collect funds from those who received funds deemed ineligible. The current deadline for the Commission to pay remaining funds is December 4, 2026.
- Lastly, staff provided an update on future Annual Meeting locations. November 8-12, 2026, Rhode Island will host the annual meeting, at the Viking Hotel in Newport. In the following years the host states are: 2027 South Carolina; 2028 Massachusetts; 2029 Pennsylvania, 2030 Georgia and 2031 Connecticut.

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

Motions

No motions made.

SPINY DOGFISH BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board met to consider a conservation equivalency (CE) proposal from the northern region states, with the exception of Maine, to implement a weekly trip limit for the 2026 fall fishery, and to review a report on the commercial fishery from the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS).

The Board reviewed the CE proposal that would allow the northern region states except Maine (NH-CT) to implement a weekly trip limit of 37,500 pounds for their-federally permitted commercial harvesters, instead of the current 7,500 pound daily limit, from September 1 to December 31, 2026. Implementation is contingent on receiving an Exempted Fishing Permit from NOAA Fisheries, currently under review, to allow federally-permitted harvesters to participate. The proposal is in response to consistent underutilization of the northern region quota in recent years and is designed to provide more economically viable trips to harvesters at a time when the stock moves farther offshore. The proposal was reviewed by the Law Enforcement Committee, Technical Committee, Plan Review Team, and Advisory Panel (AP). Only minor concerns were discussed by the committees regarding quota monitoring and the risk of discards if the processor receives an influx of supply that exceeds its capacity. The states and AP members noted that a communication system between the processor and harvesters is being developed to alleviate any capacity concerns. Additionally, the states have the ability to review daily vessel reports in all states within the region, thereby, allowing for monitoring of the weekly quota between landings in multiple states. Following the recommendation from the committees, the Board approved the proposal.

CESS provided a report on the available social and economic data of the commercial spiny dogfish fishery to help assess the impacts associated with low quotas and the potential adjustments to trip limits. The report noted the consistent underutilization of the quota is likely due to market limitations and the low ex-vessel price rather than resource availability. Additionally, it highlighted the lower quotas in recent years combined with the closure of the southern processor has left the fishery largely dependent on one northern processor, and industry advisors are concerned by the viability of the fishery. No further action or tasks were provided by the Board at this time.

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

Motions

Move to approve conservation equivalency for a Northern Region weekly aggregate trip limit of 37,500 pounds from September 1-December 31, 2026.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Ms. Zobel. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

COASTAL PELAGICS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Press Release

ASMFC Coastal Pelagics Board Sets Atlantic Cobia Total Harvest Quota and Recreational Measures for 2027 Fishing Season

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Pelagics Management Board approved a total harvest quota of 80,112 fish and status quo recreational management measures for the Atlantic migratory group of cobia for the 2027 fishing season. This total quota results in a coastwide recreational quota of 76,908 fish and commercial quota of 73,116 pounds for 2027.

The total quota level of 80,112 fish per year has been the same since 2020 and is based on the results of the [2020 benchmark stock assessment](#). The Board has maintained this quota given the absence of updated stock projections and considering the recent underutilization of recreational quota.

A new Atlantic cobia stock assessment is currently underway and scheduled to be completed in mid-2027. The Board intends to use the new assessment to inform total harvest quotas and management measures for 2028 and beyond.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, FMP Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

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PR26-12

Meeting Summary

In addition to setting fishery specifications (see above press release), the Coastal Pelagics Management Board also received a progress update on the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment; considered the Atlantic Cobia Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for the 2025 fishing year; received an update from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) on Spanish mackerel; and elected a Vice Chair.

The Board received an update on the 2027 Atlantic Cobia Stock Assessment. The Data Workshops were conducted in March-April 2026 and the Methods Workshop is scheduled for late September 2026. The Assessment Workshop is anticipated to occur in December 2026 and the peer review is being scheduled for May 2027 through the SouthEast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR). Following the peer review, the Board is scheduled to receive the assessment and peer review reports at the 2027 Summer Meeting with the intent to inform 2028 management measures for Atlantic cobia.

The Board approved Atlantic cobia state compliance reports and the FMP Review for the 2025. All states’ regulations were found to be consistent with the FMP, and the Board approved all Atlantic cobia *de minimis* requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Georgia.

The Board received an update from the SAFMC on a new Spanish mackerel action. In June 2026, the SAFMC initiated an amendment to address a fishing year change for Spanish mackerel in response to

discussion about harvest balance between the Northern and Southern Zones. The current fishing year runs from March 1-end of February which results in the Northern Zone fishing first. This makes it difficult to determine how much quota from the Southern Zone might be available to transfer to the Northern Zone since the Southern Zone has not fished their season yet. The action will consider a fishing year that allows the Southern Zone to fish first to address this issue. Regarding other Spanish mackerel management issues, the SAFMC has been considering how to respond to recommendations from the 2024 Mackerel Port Meetings as well as updating catch levels. The SAFMC is waiting until the revised MRIP time series is available and until the next Spanish mackerel stock assessment which is planned for early 2027.

Finally, the Board elected Jason McNamee of Rhode Island as Vice Chair. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to set the total harvest quota for Atlantic cobia for 2027 fishing year at the status quo level of 80,112 fish. This results in a recreational quota of 76,908 fish and a commercial quota of 73,116 lbs. Recreational management measures will remain status quo in 2027.

Motion made by Mr. Haymans and seconded by Mr. Dyar. Motion approved by consent with one abstention (FL).

Move to approve the Atlantic Cobia FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year, state compliance reports, and de minimis requests from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and Georgia.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion passes by consent with one abstention (FL).

Move to elect Jason McNamee as Vice Chair.

Motion made by Ms. Kennedy and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motion passes by unanimous consent.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 5, 2026)

Press Release

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Addendum II for Public Comment *Draft Addendum Considers Changes to Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap*

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Addendum II to Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for public comment. The Draft Addendum considers options to reduce the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap (Bay Cap) by up to 50% and distribute the cap more evenly throughout the fishing season. The options aim to alleviate a concentration of effort that may be affecting other fisheries within the Bay and other potential ecological impacts.

The Draft Addendum was initiated in response to concerns regarding declining pound net harvest and catch per unit effort in the Bay in recent years, coinciding with an increase in the concentration of reduction harvest in the summer months, and the possible downstream effects on menhaden predators.

The Draft Addendum also includes options that link the Bay Cap to the coastwide total allowable catch to maintain a more fixed proportion between the two, as well as options to distribute the Bay Cap into three quota periods to prevent a concentration of reduction harvest in the spring and summer of the fishing season.

A press release will follow with details on the availability of the document for public comment, the public hearing schedule, and how to submit written comments. This information will also be available on the [Atlantic Menhaden Draft Addendum II Action Tracker webpage](#). A public comment form will also be available as another option to submit input on the Draft Addendum's specific options.

The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in November 2026 at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island. For more information, please contact James Boyle, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at jboyle@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR26-13

Motions

Move to approve the Draft Addendum II on Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap for public comment.

Motion made by Mr. LaFrance and seconded by Dr. Colden. Motion passes (16 in favor, 2 opposed).

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to consider a draft letter to NOAA Fisheries regarding offshore striped bass aquaculture; consider the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for the 2025 fishing year; receive an update on the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment timeline; and consider a nomination to the Advisory Panel.

The Board reviewed a draft letter to NOAA Fisheries regarding offshore striped bass aquaculture. The draft letter specifically responds to NOAA Fisheries' draft technical memorandum *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*. NOAA Fisheries presented the memorandum to the Board in February 2026 and requested feedback from the Commission. Several Commissioners provided written comments to Commission staff which were compiled into the draft letter for Board consideration. Commissioner comments outlined areas where the memorandum lacks sufficient detail and outlined concerns regarding potential offshore striped bass aquaculture. The draft letter addresses enforcement concerns, economic concerns, user conflicts, project siting, aquaculture industry questions, ecological concerns, protected species concerns, biological risks, and policy/regulatory questions. The Board made the following modifications to the draft letter: 1) add content regarding the importance of a marine spatial planning process and include user conflicts and project siting under this section; 2) add a note about the high cost of VMS particularly for small vessels related to enforcement; and 3) add the term "striped bass" throughout the letter to make it clear the letter refers specifically to offshore striped bass aquaculture, and not to offshore aquaculture in general. With these modifications, the Board

moved the draft letter forward to the ISFMP Policy Board for its consideration. The Board also confirmed the conclusion of the draft letter reflects their position that given the risks and unresolved issues, there is not support for moving forward with consideration of offshore striped bass aquaculture at this time.

The Board approved state compliance reports and the FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year. All states' regulations were found to be consistent with the FMP.

The Board received an update on the timeline for completing the 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment. The 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment is underway with the Assessment Workshop scheduled for late August 2026. The NRCC peer review was originally scheduled for March 2027, however, the peer review is being moved to late May/early June 2027 to allow sufficient time for the assessment to incorporate the revised MRIP time series. The Board is scheduled to receive the assessment and peer review reports at the 2027 Summer Meeting.

Finally, the Board approved a nomination to the Advisory Panel for Mike Waine, with the American Sportfishing Association, as a North Carolina representative.

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

Motions

Move to recommend the ISFMP Policy Board approve and send the striped bass offshore aquaculture comment letter to NOAA Fisheries as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Grist and seconded by Dr. McNamee. Motion passes by consent with 2 abstentions (NOAA and USFWS).

Move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2025 fishing year and state compliance reports.

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

Move to approve Mike Waine of North Carolina to the Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Grout. Motion carries by unanimous consent.

INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (ISFMP) POLICY BOARD (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The ISFMP Policy Board met to receive reports from the Executive Committee (see earlier Executive Committee summary), the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS), and the Assessment Science Committee (ASC). The Board discussed the *De Minimis* Guidelines, and the Sector Separation Amendment timeline and stakeholder workshop process. It reviewed the work of the Fisheries Compensation Fund and the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID). Lastly, it considered two letters to NOAA Fisheries.

The Commission includes *de minimis* provisions in interstate fishery management plans (FMP)s to reduce the management burden for states whose measures would have a negligible effect on the conservation of a species. In 2022, the Policy Board approved a policy that outlines *de minimis* standards for FMPs but also allows for a species board to deviate from the standards to address unique characteristics of a fishery. At the May 2026 meeting, the Sciaenids Board reviewed potential changes to sciaenid species *de minimis* standards to address concerns that states were dropping in and out of *de minimis* regularly. The Plan Review Team (PRT) provided the Board with several recommendations to address the concerns. It was requested that the Policy Board review the recommendations of the Sciaendis PRT (e.g. tiered thresholds) to determine if the *De Minimis* Policy should be revised for any of the changes. After review, the Policy Board determined all of the potential changes could be done under the provision in the guidelines that allows for Board to deviate from the policy standards and no additional changes needed to be made to the policy at this time.

The Policy Board and the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have been working on Sector Separation Amendment that considers options to allow for sector-specific management in the summer flounder, scup, black seas bass and bluefish recreational fisheries. A Stakeholder Workshop to provide feedback on the draft Amendment is scheduled for September 2026. This workshop will provide feedback to the Board and Council on development of management objectives and options for the Sector Separation Amendment. The Policy Board discussed the appropriate timing to review feedback from the workshop and revise the draft Amendment for consideration by the Board and Council for public comment. The Board decided the best timing to review the workshop feedback would be during the Commission's Annual Meeting and consider a final range of options/alternatives at the Commission's Winter Meeting. Given the joint nature of the document and the importance of working collaboratively with the Council, It's the Board's intent for the Council to take part in all these discussions.

CESS) recently met to discuss several ongoing updates and tasks. The meeting also covered an update on the Atlantic striped bass and bluefish bioeconomic recreation demand model. Developed by contractors Scott Steinbeck and Lou Carr-Harris, using focus-group surveys, choice experiments, and bioeconomic simulations, the model links angler behavior to stock dynamics and fishery regulations. While the framework will be functional for bluefish management as the contractors wrap up their contract this month, further refinement will be required before it is ready for use for Atlantic striped bass management. Beyond this project, CESS is adjusting socioeconomic metrics in the draft risk and uncertainty tool, ready to assist with future management efforts for other Commission-managed species, and working to create an Atlantic striped bass economic data infographic.

The Policy Board reviewed ASC options to adjust the Commission's stock assessment schedule, including a request to move up the next tautog assessment to 2028 to allow for the incorporation of the new MRIP values and new surveys in the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia region. The Board agreed to delay the weakfish assessment, previously scheduled for 2028, and move up tautog to 2028. The modernized version of the Commission's Guide to Fisheries Science and Stock Assessments was presented. It replaces the fisheries science guide developed over 15 years ago with a new, interactive digital version tailored to reflect current scientific methods and improve accessibility. Staff expects to release a downloadable, printable PDF version within the next few months for offline use. You can

find the interactive version of the guide [here](#). Lastly, staff updated the Board on two on-going assessments. The Atlantic Croaker Stock Assessment Peer Review was conducted the July 27-30, 2026 and will be presented to the Sciaenid Management Board in November. A data workshop for the Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment will be held next week.

A representative of the [Fisheries Compensation Program](#) for Atlantic Coast Offshore Wind, provided an overview of the program and the work they will be doing in the near future. The Fisheries Compensation Fund is a regional program established to compensate affected commercial and recreational for-hire fishing businesses, through a fair and equitable claims process, for potential impacts caused by offshore wind development along the Atlantic Seaboard. It is focused on *future* compensation programs (it does *not* affect programs already in place) and how money is distributed *through* a regional fund, *not* on how money comes into such a fund. It has designated a Regional Fund Administrator (RFA), which is the third-party, independent administrator tasked with designing and developing a fair and equitable claims process to compensate fishing businesses for potential costs and losses incurred by offshore wind development. In addition, a Design Oversight Committee and For-Hire Committee have been established to provide advice and guidance from the states, fishing industry, and offshore wind developers as the RFA develops the processes, policies, and procedures. For more information about the program and upcoming meetings check out its [website](#).

In April 2026, NOAA Fisheries introduced the Recreational Angler Partnership Improvement Directive (RAPID) as a core component of its updated National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy. RAPID is designed to modernize the way saltwater recreational fishing data is collected and managed by transforming the existing Marine Recreational Information Program. Staff presented RAPID goals including extend shared-governance partnerships with state, council, commission, and federal partners; set direction for co-design of future recreational fishing data enterprise; and maintain current data collection design until recommendations are implemented. An Information page on RAPID has been created and can be found [here](#). A communications plan is set to be distributed later this month. Notable achievements for RAPID include Waves 5-6, 2026 APAIS allocation increased by 10%+ for Atlantic (ME-GA) with more to be added through all of 2027; and the Steering Committee soliciting regional workshop planning team participation from partners to begin in August 2026. Looking forward an inventory of existing recreational fishing data collection programs will be conducted and workshops will be held from October 2026 – March 2027.

Finally, the Board reviewed approved two letters to be sent to NOAA Fisheries. The first letter is to recommend changes in lobster measures in the EEZ for LCMA 5's lobster closed season. It will allow traps to be set and black sea bass to be harvested but still not allow for the harvest of lobster and Jonah crab (see American Lobster Board meeting summary). The second letter provides comments on the NOAA Fisheries' draft technical memorandum *Charting A Course for Striped Bass: Science and Regulatory Innovation for Offshore Aquaculture*. The letter addresses enforcement concerns, economic concerns, user conflicts, project siting, aquaculture industry questions, ecological concerns, protected species concerns, biological risks, and policy/regulatory questions. Given the risks and unresolved issues identified in the letter, the Commission does not support NOAA moving forward with consideration of offshore striped bass aquaculture at this time.

Motions

On behalf of the American Lobster Management Board, move to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending the modification of the federal regulations for the LCMA 5 season closure to allow black sea bass fishermen that hold a lobster permit to set and haul gear to fish for black sea bass beginning on March 9 instead of March 24 while maintaining the prohibition on lobster and Jonah crab harvest and possession from February 1 through March 31.

Motion made by Ms. Zobel. Motion passes by consent with 2 abstentions (NOAA, FWS).

On behalf of the Atlantic Striped Bass Board, move to recommend the ISFMP Policy Board approve and send the striped bass offshore aquaculture comment letter to NOAA Fisheries as modified today.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes (15 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to approve the Commission Stock Assessment Schedule, as modified today (Option 1, delay weakfish and assess tautog in 2028).

Motion made by Dr. McNamee and seconded by Mr. Gary. Motion passes (12 in favor, 1 opposed, 5 abstentions).

BUSINESS SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (AUGUST 6, 2026)

Meeting Summary

The Commission considered two revisions to the Commission Rules and Regulations during its Business Session, as recommended by the Executive Committee. The first revision changes the criteria to guide states in declaring an interest on species management boards. Specifically, “a state shall be deemed to have an interest in a fishery if it meets either of the following criteria: (a) The species is found in the waters under the state’s jurisdiction in at least two of the past five years, as documented with state or federal fishery-dependent or -independent data or other credible evidence brought forth by the state (such as data from spawning migrations, peer-reviewed publications, eDNA, or other); (b) The state’s fishery participants are recorded as having taken at least 1% of the total Atlantic coast commercial or recreational landings of the species in at least three of the past five years, as documented by state or federal statistics.”

This revision was made in recognition of the changing distribution 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 species management boards. The revised criteria are meant to add specificity to the eligibility criteria, clarify valid data sources, correct for redundant and outdated language, and better reflect the species and fisheries under Commission management.

The second revision changes the name of the Legislative and Governor Appointees Sections to Legislative and Governor Appointees Committees to better reflect the committee structure with the Commission.

Both revisions were approved. A revised Rules and Regulations will be posted to the website next week at <https://asmfc.org/resources/management-guiding-document/asmfc-compact-rules-and-regulations/>. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Executive Director, at rbeal@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the changes as presented today to the Commission Rules and Regulations

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