

## INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

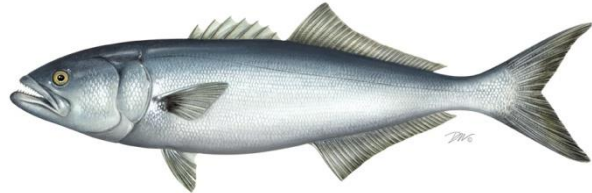
# Bluefish

### Species Range

Coastwide (Maine through Florida)

### Management Unit

Maine through Florida



### Stock Status

The 2021 NEFSC bluefish management track stock assessment indicates that the stock is overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2019 relative to the updated biological reference points. The assessment is an update through 2019 of commercial and calibrated MRIP data.

### Reference Points

- F Threshold =  $F_{MSY\ PROXY} = F_{35\%SPR} = 0.181$ 
  - Current (2019) = 0.172
- Spawning Stock Biomass threshold ( $1/2\ SSB_{MSYPROXY}$ ) = 222 million lbs
- Spawning Stock Biomass target ( $SSB_{MSYPROXY}$ ) =  $SSB_{35\%} = 444$  million lbs
  - Current SSB (2018) = 211 million lbs

Spawning Stock Biomass is estimated at 211 million pounds, approximately 48% of its target and 95% of the threshold. Fishing mortality is estimated to be 0.172, below the fishing mortality threshold (0.181). Although fishing mortality was below the threshold in 2018 and 2019, fishing mortality exceeded the updated threshold every year from 1985 to 2017. The largest recruitment in the time series occurred in 1989 at 98 million fish, and the lowest recruitment was in 2016 at 29 million fish. Recruitment over the last 10 years has varied around the time series average of 46 million fish. A research track stock assessment is scheduled for November of 2022

### **Next scheduled stock assessment**

November 2022

### Involved States and Jurisdictions

ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS

### Active Boards/Committees

ASMFC Bluefish Management Board, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), ASMFC Bluefish Technical Committee, MAFMC Bluefish Monitoring Committee, ASMFC Bluefish Advisory Panel, ASMFC Bluefish Plan Review Team

## **Chairs**

Board, Chair – Joe Cimino (12/2021); Vice-Chair – Vacant

Technical Committee, Chair – Sam Truesdell (1/2022); Vice-Chair – Vacant

Advisory Panel, Chair – Vacant

Stock Assessment Subcommittee – Mike Celestino (8/2011)

## **Staff Lead**

Chelsea Tuohy, [ctuohy@asmfc.org](mailto:ctuohy@asmfc.org)

## **Management Plan History**

### **[Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Bluefish Fishery \(1998\)](#)**

Amendment 1, prepared by MAFMC and ASMFC, is intended to manage the bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) fishery under both the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) of 1976, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA), and Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (ACFCMA). The goal of the management plan is to conserve the bluefish resource along the Atlantic coast. The Council and Commission have adopted five major objectives to achieve this goal: (1) increase understanding of the stock and of the fishery; (2) provide the highest availability of bluefish to U.S. fishermen while maintaining, within limits, traditional uses of bluefish; (3) provide for cooperation among the coastal states, the various regional marine fishery management councils, and federal agencies involved along the coast to enhance the management of bluefish throughout its range; (4) prevent recruitment overfishing; and (5) reduce the waste in both the commercial and recreational fisheries.

### **[Addendum I: Biological Monitoring Program \(February 2012\)](#)**

Addendum I establishes a coastwide monitoring program for bluefish to improve the quantity and quality of ageing information used in future bluefish stock assessments.

### **[Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Bluefish: Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment](#)**

Amendment 2 updates the 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.

Given the stock's overfished condition, the Amendment establishes a 7-year rebuilding plan to be achieved through a constant fishing mortality approach. Rebuilding progress will be analyzed through management track stock assessments every two years. The Amendment also revises sector allocations, increasing the recreational allocation from 83% to 86% of the acceptable biological catch and decreasing the commercial allocation from 17% to 14%. Catch data from 1981-2018 were used as the basis for sector allocations since this time series captures the cyclical nature of the fishery, while providing each sector with sufficient access to the resource considering historical usage.

The Amendment revises state-by-state commercial allocations to better reflect the current distribution of the stock and the needs of the states' commercial fisheries. 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. Recognizing that several states will be losing quota during a time when the coastwide commercial quota is already at an historic low, the Amendment phases-in the allocation changes over 7 years in order to reduce short-term economic impacts to the affected commercial fishing industries. State allocations will be reviewed by the Commission and Council within 5 years.

The Amendment 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 Commission and Council 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.

### **Annual Events**

- Annual compliance reports are due May 1. The PRT reviews compliance reports and prepares an FMP Review. The FMP Review is presented to the Board in August.
- Monitoring committee meets in July to outline recommendations for the upcoming year's fishing regulations including any proposed changes to the minimum fish size, mesh size, escape vent sizes, or other compliance criteria for the commercial fishery, as well as to recommend changes to the quota to account for management uncertainty. The Monitoring Committee forwards recommendations to the Board and Council.
- Board and Council meet jointly at the MAFMC August meeting to adopt an Acceptable Biological Catch, a commercial quota, and a recreational harvest limit, and to set commercial specifications.
- Monitoring Committee meets in November to outline recommendations for the upcoming year's recreational measures, including minimum fish size, season, and possession limit. The Monitoring Committee forwards recommendations to the Board and the Council.
- Board and Council meet jointly at the MAFMC December meeting to set recreational specifications.
- NOAA Fisheries reviews the joint recommendation and sets the final annual federal specifications in January of each year. A memo is sent to the Board detailing the annual federal specifications.