

# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## ASMFC Bluefish Management Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

August 6, 2020  
8:30 – 11:00 a.m.  
Webinar

### Draft Agenda

The times listed are approximate; the order in which these items will be taken is subject to change; other items may be added as necessary.

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*C. Batsavage, ASMFC/M. Luisi, MAFMC*) 8:30 a.m.
2. Board Consent 8:30 a.m.
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from May 2020
3. Public Comment 8:35 a.m.
4. Review Plan Development Team/Fishery Management Action Team (PDT/FMAT) Discussion Document on Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Draft Amendment (*D. Colson Leaning, M. Seeley*) 8:45 a.m.
5. Provide Guidance to PDT/FMAT on Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Draft Amendment (*C. Batsavage, ASMFC/M. Luisi, MAFMC*) 9:15 a.m.
6. Consider FMP Review and State Compliance (*D. Colson Leaning*) **Action** Fishing Year 10:45 a.m.
7. Other Business/Adjourn 10:55 a.m.

# MEETING OVERVIEW

## ASMFC Bluefish Management Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Webinar

August 6, 2020

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Chair: Chris Batsavage (NC) Assumed Chairmanship: 12/19	Technical Committee Chair: Mike Celestino (NJ)	Law Enforcement Committee Representative: Rob Kersey (MD)
Vice Chair: Joe Cimino (NJ)	Advisory Panel Chair: Vacant	Previous Board Meeting: May 6, 2020
Voting Members: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS (17)		

### 2. Board Consent

- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of Proceedings from May 2020

**3. Public Comment** – At the beginning of the meeting public comment will be taken on items not on the agenda. Individuals that wish to speak at this time should use the webinar raise your hand function and the Board Chair will let you know when to speak. For agenda items that have already gone out for public hearing and/or have had a public comment period that has closed, the Board Chair may determine that additional public comment will not provide additional information. In this circumstance, the Board Chair will not allow additional public comment on an issue. For agenda items that the public has not had a chance to provide input, the Board Chair may allow limited opportunity for comment. The Board Chair has the discretion to limit the number of speakers and/or the length of each comment.

### 4. Review Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) Discussion Document on Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Draft Amendment (8:45-9:15 a.m.)

#### Background

- In December 2017, the Board and Council jointly initiated the development of an amendment to consider modifications to the fishery management plan's goals and objectives, commercial/recreational allocations, commercial allocations to the states, the quota transfer processes, and any other issues pertinent to management of the fishery.
- The 2019 operational stock assessment indicated that the stock was overfished relative to the updated biological reference points. In response to the overfished designation, a rebuilding plan was incorporated into the amendment.
- At the June meeting, the Board and Council directed the FMAT to further develop and analyze a range of management approaches including, but not limited to, recreational sector separation, the refereed commercial quota transfer provision, sector transfers, and regional commercial quotas.
- The Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) met in July to review staff progress in developing the management approaches and provide recommendations. **(Supplemental Materials)**

#### Presentations

- FMAT Report by M. Seeley & D. Colson Leaning

**5. Provide Guidance to the FMAT on Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Draft Amendment (9:15-10:45 a.m.)**

**Background**

- The Board and Council should provide guidance to the FMAT on the specific approaches to be considered for further analysis and those that should not be pursued further in this action.
- The FMAT will reconvene following the meeting to further develop draft management alternatives. At the next meeting in December, the Council and Board will consider approval of a range of alternatives for inclusion in a public hearing document.

**6. Consider Approval of FMP Review and State Compliance for the 2019 Fishing Year (10:45-10:55 a.m.)**

**Background**

- Annual state compliance reports for bluefish are due May 1. The Plan Review Team reviewed the reports and drafted the FMP review report for the 2019 fishing year. **(Briefing Materials)**
- The PRT review indicated that all states implemented regulations consistent with the intent of Amendment 1 and Addendum I of the Bluefish FMP and Maine, South Carolina and Georgia meet the requirements for *de minimis* status for 2020.
- The PRT recommends that the Board task the TC with reviewing the effectiveness of the Addendum I sampling design and reevaluate the optimal geographic range and sample size for bluefish age data. Additionally, the PRT recommends that the TC look into the increased importance of recreational discards in stock assessments. Generating reliable discard length data from recreational anglers could improve the robustness of stock assessments moving forward.

**Presentations**

- FMP Review of the 2019 fishing year by D. Colson Leaning

**Board Actions for Consideration**

- Consider approving the FMP Review Report and state compliance
- Consider tasking the TC with the PRT recommendations listed above in the background section.

**7. Other Business (10:55-11:00 a.m.)**

**8. Adjourn**

## Bluefish Technical Committee Task List

Activity Level: Medium

Committee Overlap Score: Medium

### Committee Task List

- July 2020: Meeting to review recommendations on 2021 specifications (coastwide quota and RHLs). Changes to the Council's risk policy may warrant changes to previously implemented specifications for 2021
- November 2020: Develop recommendations on 2021 recreational measures
- Spring 2021: Annual Biological Monitoring Program requirement to collect a minimum of 100 bluefish to enhance age and length data used in stock assessments
- Annual state compliance reports are due May 1

### TC Members

Michael Celestino (NJ DEP – Chair), Sam Truesdell (MA DMF – Vice-Chair), Amy Zimney (SC DNR), Sandra Dumais (NY DEC), Eric Durell (MD DNR), Jim Gartland (VA VIMS), Kurt Gottschall (CT DMF), BJ Hilton (GA DNR), Nicole Lengyel (RI DEM), Joseph Munyandorero (FL FWC) Lee Paramore (NC DENR), Melissa Smith (ME DMR), Kevin Sullivan (NH FGD), Richard Wong (DE DFW), Tony Wood (NEFSC), Matt Seeley (MAFMC)

**DRAFT PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION  
BLUEFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD AND  
MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**Webinar  
May 6, 2020**

These minutes are draft and subject to approval by the Bluefish Management Board.  
The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

Draft Proceedings of the Bluefish Management Board and  
Mid-Atlantic Marine Fisheries Council Meeting Webinar  
May 2020

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**INDEX OF MOTIONS**

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).
2. **Approval of proceedings of February 4, 2020** by consent (Page 1).
3. **Adjourn** by consent (Page 44).

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**ATTENDANCE**

Board Members

Nichola Meserve, MA	John Clark, DE, proxy for D. Saveikis (AA)
Raymond Kane, MA (GA)	Roy Miller, DE (GA)
Sarah Ferrara, MA, proxy for Rep. Peake (LA)	Craig Pugh, DE, proxy for Rep. Carson (LA)
Jason McNamee, RI (AA)	Bill Anderson, MD (AA)
David Borden, RI (GA)	Mike Luisi, MD, Administrative proxy
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Rep. Sosnowski (LA)	Russell Dize, MD (GA)
Justin Davis, CT (AA)	Phil Langley, MD, proxy for Del. Stein (LA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)	Steve Bowman, VA (AA)
Matthew Gates, CT, proxy for Sen. Miner (LA)	Ellen Bolen, VA, Administrative proxy
Jim Gilmore, NY (AA)	Bryan Plumlee, VA (GA)
Maureen Davidson, NY, Administrative proxy	Sen. Monty Mason
Emerson Hasbrouck, NY (GA)	Steve Murphey, NC (AA)
John McMurray, NY, proxy for Sen. Kaminsky (LA)	Chris Batsavage, NC, Administrative proxy
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)	Jerry Mannen, NC (GA)
Tom Fote, NJ (GA)	Marty Gary, PRFC
Asm. Eric Houghtaling, NJ (LA)	Mike Ruccio, NMFS
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, Legislative proxy (Chair)	

**(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)**

**Ex-Officio Members**

**Staff**

Bob Beal	Dustin Colson Leaning
Toni Kerns	Tina Berger
Max Appelman	Jeff Kipp
Maya Drzewicki	Julia Beaty, MAFMC
Kirby Rootes-Murdy	Kiley Dancy, MAFMC
Caitlin Starks	

**Guests**

John Almeida, NOAA	William Brantley, NC DNR	Jeff Deem, Lorton, VA
Rep. Thad Altman, FL (LA)	Delayne Brown, NH F&G	Peter deFur, ESC
Coly Ares, RI DEM	Jeff Brust, NJ DFW	John DePersenaire, RFA
Mike Armstrong, MA DMF	Erika Burgess, FL FWC	Greg DiDomenico
Pat Augustine, Coram, NY	John Carmichael, SAFMC	Anthony DiLernia
Dave Bard, NOAA	Patrick Cassidy	Steve Doctor, MD DNR
David Behringer, NC DNR	Mike Celestino, NJ DFW	Russell Dunn, NOAA
Mel Bell, SC DNR	Peter Clarke, NJ DFW	Steve Newellman
Alan Bianchi, NC DNR	Allison Colden, CBF	Warren Elliott, PA (LA)
Jessie Bisette	Heather Corbett, NJ DFW	Peter Fallon, Maine
Sarah Bland, NOAA	Nicole Costa, RI DEM	Lynn Fegley, MD DNR
Jason Boucher, DE DFW	Derek Cox, FL FWC	Marianne Ferguson, NOAA
Ray Bogan, Pt. Pleasant, NJ	Sandra Dumais, NYS DEC	Cindy Ferrio, NOAA
Karen Bradbury, Office of Sen. Whitehouse	Jessica Daher, NJ DFW	Dawn Franco GA DNR
	Tim Daniels, NJ DFW	Rick Frenzel

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Tony Friedrich	Melissa Leone, NYS DEC	Dr. Malcolm Rhodes, SC (GA)
Thomas Fuda	Tom Little, NJ LEG	Al Ristori
G. Kara	Carl LoBue	Mary Sabo, MAFMC
Lew Gillingham, VMRC	Chris Ludford	Scott Sakowski, NOAA
Angela Giuliano, MD DNR	Dee Lupton, NC DNR	John Schoenig
Willy Goldsmith	Loren Lustig, PA (GA)	Chris Scott, NOAA
Sonny Gwinn, Berlin, MD	Chip Lynch, NOAA	Tara Scott, NOAA
Paul Haertel	Shanna Madsen, VMRC	Richard Seagraves
Jon Hare, NOAA	Kyle Martin, NYS DEC	Matthew Seeley, MAFMC
Bridget Harner, NOAA	Genine McClair, MD DNR	Alexei Sharov, MD DNR
Hannah Hart, FL FWC	Ashleigh McCord, NOAA	Gary Shepherd, NOAA
Doug Haymans, GA (AA)	Dan McKiernan, MA (AA)	Jared Silva, MA DMF
Steve Heins	Nichola Meserve, MA DMF	Somers Smott, VMRC
Dewey Hemilright	Mike Millard, US FWS	Julia Socrates, NYS DEC
Pete Himchak	Sen. Dave Miramant, ME (LA)	Scott Steinback, NOAA
Carol Hoffman, NYS DEC	Jose Montanez, MAMFC	CJ Sweetman, FL FWC
Rusty Hudson	Chris Moore, MAFMC	H. Takade-Heumacher, USFWS
Peter Hughes	Wendy Morrison, NOAA	Mark Terceiro, NOAA
Jason Jarvis	Brandon Muffley, MAFMC	Wes Townsend
Yan Jiao, Univ. VT	Amanda Mullikin	Howard Townsend, NOAA
Lane Johnston	Steve Murphey, NC (AA)	Sam Truesdell, MA DMF
Cynthia Jones, ODU	Allison Murphy, NOAA	Mike Waine, ASA
Jeff Kaelin, Lund's Fisheries	Brian Neilan, NJ DFW	Megan Ware, ME DMR
Chad Keith, NOAA	Laurie Nolan	Samatha Werner, NOAA
Loren Kellogg, NOAA	Derek Orner, NOAA	Patrick White
Moira Kelly, NOAA	Cheri Patterson, NH (AA)	Ritchie White, NH (GA)
Lara Klibansky, NC DNR	Michael Pentony, NOAA	Kate Wilke, TNC
Kathy Knowlton, GA DNR	Mariah Pflieger, Oceana	Angel Willey, MD DNR
Adrienne Kotula	Olivia Phillips, VMRC	Sara Winslow
Alexa Kretsch, VMRC	Michael Pirri	Charles Witek
Kris Kuhn, PA F&B	Nicholas Popoff, US FWS	Steven Witthuhn
Ben Landry	Chad Power, NJ DFW	Anthony Wood, NOAA
Wilson Laney	Jill Ramsey, VMRC	Chris Wright, NOAA
Katie Latanich	Kathy Rawls, NC DNR	Amy Zimney, SC DNR
Scott Lenox	Stephanie Rekemeyer, NYSDEC	Erik Zlokovitz, MD DNR

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The Bluefish Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) convened via webinar; Wednesday, May 6, 2020, and was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by Co-Chairmen Chris Batsavage and Michael Luisi.

**CALL TO ORDER**

CHAIRMAN CHRIS BATSAVAGE: Welcome everyone to Day 2 of the ASMFC Webinar Week. I would like to call the Bluefish Management Board meeting to order. This is a joint meeting with the Bluefish Board and the Mid-Atlantic Council. My name is Chris Batsavage; I'm the Administrative Proxy from North Carolina, serving as Board Chair.

I also serve as one of North Carolina's representatives on the Mid-Atlantic Council. With me today is Co-Chair sitting to my right, give or take 400 miles away is Mike Luisi, Chair of the Mid-Atlantic Council, and also up here at the virtual table, maybe not quite as far away as Mike is our bluefish lead for ASMFC Dustin Colson Leaning, and for the Mid-Atlantic Council Matt Seeley.

The main item on today's agenda is the development of the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. There aren't any action items on today's agenda, so I don't anticipate any motions today. However, if the need for a motion arises, and since this is a joint meeting, then we'll need a motion and a second from the Board and Council to debate the motion, and both the Board and Council will need to vote in favor of the motion for it to carry.

I know all of you are familiar with that but just wanted to make sure that members of the public knew how we conduct business during the joint meetings.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I'll move on through the agenda, we'll start with Approval of the Agenda. Does any Board or Council members have any modifications to the agenda? If you do, please use the hand raise button.

MR. DUSTIN COLSON LEANING: Chris, just this short introduction here, I'm sorry. We just were hoping to read out a few names of Commissioners and Council members who may be in attendance who haven't been accounted for yet. If you don't mind us doing that at some point soon.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay actually yes. I guess we'll just doublecheck and make sure there are no changes to the agenda, and after that we'll go ahead and do that. Toni, does anyone have their hand up for any modifications to the agenda?

MS. TONI KERNS: I do not see any hands raised.  
CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay great, thanks. Yes, so Dustin if you want to go ahead and just check through the names.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Thanks Chris, and sorry for the interruption before. It looks like we have most of everyone here, so please do just raise your hand so we can notify our staff to unmute you if your name is read out, so Stephen Train, was not in attendance yesterday, I don't think he's here today. We also have Melissa Ziobron.

MS. KERNS: Not here.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Okay, then we also have Senator Ronnie Cromer, and then we have Representative Trey Rhodes, Senator Thad Altman, and Bill Orndorf. That's the names, everyone else has been accounted for. Matt, do you have the list?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks, Dustin.

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MR. MATT SEELEY: Yes, this is Matt Seeley, I have the list in front of me. I believe for all voting members of the Council; I believe that everyone is in attendance.

REPRESENTATIVE THAD ALTMAN: This is Representative Thad Altman, I'm also in attendance. Are you able to hear me?

MR. COLSON LEANING: We can, thank you.

MS. KERNS: Thanks Thad, we do hear you.

REPRESENTATIVE ALTMAN: Great.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks for this double-checking on Board and Council members.

#### **APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Moving on, next is Approval of the Proceedings from the February Board Meeting. Does anyone have any changes to the minutes that were including in the briefing materials? Are there any hands raised for that Toni?

MS. KERNS: No hands are raised.

#### **REVIEW PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY ON BLUEFISH ALLOCATION AND REBUILDING AMENDMENT PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING DOCUMENT**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Then we will consider those approved. The next item is to Review the Public Comment Summary on the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment Public Information and Scoping Document. Dustin and Matt will present a summary of the scoping hearings and comments, as well as present information on the FMAT and PDT meeting, where they reviewed scoping comments to provide recommendations on the scope of the Amendment. Dustin and Matt the floor is yours.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Thanks everybody for joining us on our first stop on our virtual meetings for the joint meetings, and thank you to Toni for checking to make sure everyone was here this morning. I know that's a daunting task, given that we have so many people in these joint meetings. Today I'll begin with a recap of the Scoping Comment Summary, first by recapping the Amendment goal, and our current timeline, followed by a review of the Public Comment Summary. Afterwards Matt will present the FMAT report, and then we will open up the meeting for Board and Council discussion on the Amendment. Our objective today is to receive guidance on the scope of the Amendment, so that the FMAT can focus their attention on specific issues for further development. I just want to check, is my sound okay?

MS. KERNS: Yes.

#### **RECAP OF THE SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY**

MR. COLSON LEANING: All right, perfect. The goal of this Amendment is to review and possibly revise the allocations between the commercial and recreational fisheries, and the commercial allocations to the states. This action is also need to rebuild the bluefish stock, avoid overages, and achieve optimum yield, prevent overfishing, and reduce the need for quota transfers.

While not a complete timeline, this shows some of the big steps taken thus far in blue, followed by upcoming big steps in the amendment process in green. As a reminder, the Amendment was initiated in December of 2017, and the first round of scoping happened that summer. Most comments received supported status quo, or delaying any changes to the FMP until after the MRIP estimates were incorporated into management.

The 2019 Operational Stock Assessment indicated that the stock was overfished, and

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NOAA released overfished designation in November of last year. This began the two-year countdown for when a rebuilding plan must be implemented. Several months of scoping was held in February and March of this year, and today we'll be presenting the Scoping Comment Summary.

Our hope is that draft management alternatives will be refined in June, and approved in August, which will give staff just enough time to develop the Public Hearing Document for approval in December. The goal is to have final action in the spring of 2021, so that the Rebuilding Plan can be implemented by the spring of 2022.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY**

The supplemental scoping period occurred in February and March, and 11 hearings were held from Massachusetts to Florida. Staff recorded a total number of 273 comments received in writing and in person at hearings. The public was asked to comment on five issues that were defined through the first round of scoping, in addition to the new issue of rebuilding the stock.

As a reminder these issues are; the fishery management plan goals and objectives, the commercial and recreational sector allocations, the commercial allocations to the states, transfers, including both the recreational and the commercial sector transfers, and the commercial state-to-state transfers.

The rebuilding plan, as well as this Issue 6 Other Issues, which is used as a placeholder to gather additional information from the public on any management issues that they felt needed to be addressed through this action. Amendment 1, established the following goals and objectives. In short, the goal is to conserve bluefish along the Atlantic Coast, and the objectives include increasing understanding of the stock, providing the highest availability, providing for management cooperation and preventing

recruitment overfishing and reducing waste. The majority of comments supported revision of the current FMP goals and objectives, and called for inclusion of new considerations. Some of these suggested revisions include accounting for the needs of the bait and snapper fishery, emphasizing the importance of shore-based fishing, and encompassing environmental conditions in shifting baselines.

There was also a call to maximize abundance, and the importance of reflecting the value of the bluefish to the recreational fishery, and the intrinsic value of the released fish, and the importance of catch and release to the fishery.

Issue 2 covers the commercial and recreational allocation. Many comments here supported status quo, as you can see up there on the top of the table, 17 comments received supported status quo. Reasons for status quo included just general disbelief in the new MRIP estimates, a desire to prevent any reductions to the commercial quota, and the reasoning that no change to the allocation is to be made, as long as the ability to transfer quota between the recreational and commercial sector remains in place in the plan.

Then five comments received supported updating the time series and using revised MRIP data to generate new sector allocations, and several of those comments called for the most recent ten years of data to be used as a baseline. In addition, one hearing we heard a recommendation that we should consider socioeconomic data to help inform allocation decisions. This was also followed up in a letter from an organization.

Those who spoke in support of catch-based allocations said that a landings-based allocation ignores the catch and release nature of the fishery, and as such should be updated with catch-based allocations. Allocations should not ignore the conservation decision made by

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thousands of anglers who decided to release to be good stewards of the fishery was their argument. Is everyone seeing commercial allocations to the states on the screen? I had a temporary freeze on my computer. I want to make sure it's up to date.

MS. KERNS: Yes.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Okay perfect, I had a minor heart attack there, but I'll keep going. Commercial Allocations for the States is Issue 3, and public opinion was split on this issue. However, the majority of comments in support of status quo were from individuals from southern states, and conversely the majority of comments supporting updated allocations were received from stakeholders from northern states.

Several comments desired status quo, until at least the stock is rebuilt. Other comments in support of status quo preferred to utilize transfers, rather than reallocate quota. Comments in support of reallocation had several reoccurring ideas. Those being the base allocation should be on the last ten years of landings, and states that repeatedly underutilize quota should be facing reductions.

Third, a lot of people just called for reallocation of quota to the northern states. Issue 4 covers the quota transfer processes, and the public commented on both the recreational to commercial sector transfer, as well as the state-to-state commercial transfers. Public opinion was split on this issue as well, on allowing transfers from the recreational to the commercial sector, with slightly more comments being in opposition to the transfer. Those who commented in opposition said that sector transfers increased fishing pressure on the stock, and goes against the catch and release nature of the fishery.

A few comments were simply asking for no transfers while the stock rebuilds, and possible continuation after it's rebuilt to the target. A suggestion was also made to make sector transfers bidirectional, to allow greater equity and flexibility within the plan. On the flip side, when looking at commercial state-to-state transfers, it is a widely popular tool with 14 comments in support of keeping them status quo, and only a few comments in opposition. Those who support the transfers often said that they offer flexibility and economic opportunity.

Issue 5 being rebuilding, received a good amount of input as well. There are two viewpoints on rebuilding that seem to come out. Some commented that rebuilding should be done as quickly as possible to ensure that the stock recovers, and conversely others felt that a fast rebuilding plan should take place.

However, the majority in opposition to a fast rebuilding plan called for rebuilding over ten years, to allow more fishing to occur in the short term, and have less drastic changes to management measures. Many people called for more research on the changing environmental effects on the fishery, and they said that environmental protection for bluefish habitat is critical. Others said that better data needed to be gathered on population dynamics and distribution for understanding of the stock before rebuilding was tackled.

Those who doubted the overfished status suggested several possible reasons as to why available abundance has decreased. We heard migration patterns have shifted. They are living further offshore. Several have pointed to the cyclical nature of the stock, and others of course doubted the credibility of MRIP and thought that the new estimates were the only reason for the overfished designation, when prior data has been showing that the stock was doing well, or at least above the threshold.

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Several individuals were concerned that drastic changes to measures would turn bluefish into a discard fishery, and stakeholders requested a full suite of rebuilding plans and projections incorporated into the draft amendment for public comment. Lastly, a few individuals asked why the SSC maximum sustainable yield target proxy was at the level which the fishery had never seen before, and wondered if rebuilding to this new target level was even possible.

This graph displays the SSB in the solid line over time, and as you can see it does not cross the top dotted SSB target level going all the way back to 1985. That was feeling some of the concern of the people who thought it would be very challenging to rebuild the stock. However, when we looked at the fishing effort it has been above the threshold throughout the time series, with the exception of 2018.

Initial projections provided by Tony Wood, indicate that preventing overfishing should allow the stock to bounce back quickly. There was a large amount of comments received that did not directly pertain to the established amendment issues, and we attempted to categorize them based on reoccurring comments here. We received 11 comments on sector separation, which I'll go into greater detail on a later slide. Throughout the scoping process, it was clear that many people don't have faith in the MRIP estimates, and the methodology used to produce them. One commenter said that NOAA Fisheries needs to do a better job of outreach about MRIP methods, so stakeholders increase confidence in the data.

At this same hearing in Massachusetts, there was frustration that there is never an MRIP representative at public hearings. The vast majority of comments received on bag limits were in favor of increasing the bag limit, most likely a reaction to the pretty significant

decrease in the bag limit that happened very recently.

There were also a large variety of other comments, many of them only one or two on a particular concept. Many of them were observations out at sea. I'll display some of the comment themes on the next slide. We had comments on adding a minimum size limit, often for the protection of the fishery, and in hope that it would rebuild quicker.

A lot of comments talked about identifying the intrinsic value of fish left in the water, as well as the catch and release aspect of the fishery. A lot of people called for maximizing abundance, and addressing discard mortality assumption rates. There were a few comments in regards to looking into ecosystem-based management, something which we could potentially look into incorporating into the FMP goals and objectives.

Again, people called for more research on stock dynamics. A few said close the fishery entirely until it is rebuilt, and then we also received a request from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to consider the inclusion of de minimis status for the recreational fishery in the amendment. The request is that the Board and Council consider waiving recreational fishery regulations if a state comprises less than 1 percent of coastwide harvest.

Before we take questions from the Board and Council on the Public Comment Summary, this slide provides a closer look at the discussion surrounding the for-hire sector separation. During the public comment period individuals suggested two ways in which for-hire sector separation should be handled.

This could take the form of a sub-ACL, where the for-hire sector is provided its own allocation. Other individuals from the public asked for a for-hire, what they called an

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allowance, which would formally develop a policy that continues the use of different management measures for the for-hire fleet, but that doesn't involve a specific sector allocation.

During scoping members of the public provided several reasons for adopting a for-hire sector separation. Some noted that for-hire catch is such a small proportion of overall catch, and thus it would be justifiable to have their own allocations. Others commented that the for-hire fleet is better managed and accounted for under VTR data, and lastly the for-hire sector that relies on a steady bag limit to sell trips, may be sheltered from the wild swings in MRIP estimates from year to year, and the sector may be better able to maintain consistent recreational measures.

Public comments opposed to this idea often stated that for-hire sector separation was not fair and equitable to other recreational anglers, and they thought it unfair that some individuals who could afford to pay to go on a charter get a higher bag limit than those who fish from shore, or their own boat.

Additional recreational measures also create challenges for enforcement, especially when intercepted at marinas. That wraps up the public comment summary. If people could mute their lines, just we're getting a little bit of feedback. Again, that wraps up the public comment summary.

#### **FMAT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

MR. COLSON LEANING: Next, Matt will dive into the FMAT summary and recommendations. Just give us a moment as we transition to sharing Matt's screen. Over to you.

MR. MATT SEELEY: Thanks, Dustin for giving a great review of the Scoping Comment Summary Documents, and all of the comments that we did receive. As Dustin and Chris both indicated,

I'm going to go through the FMAT report to try to give you a brief summary of what the FMAT was thinking, based on all of these comments and going through.

As a little background here, the FMAT consists of ten individuals, including staff from the Council, GARFO, the Science Center, Commission, and the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. The FMAT last met via webinar on April 13, to discuss the Scoping Comment Summary Document, and to develop questions or recommendations for Council and Board discussion.

Before I really get going. I just want to emphasize that we're working on a very stringent timeline here, with the goal of having a public hearing document in front of you all at the joint December meeting. We definitely feel we can meet this deadline, if we continue to follow along the timeline that Dustin provided, and we make the necessary progress here today, which includes identifying what –

MS. KERNS: Matt, we lost you.

MR. COLSON LEANING: We lost you for about a minute and a half. It was probably because it was going through your phone, and your phone lost service or something like that. I'm not sure. But you were just talking about how important it was to stay on the timeline, and then it went blank. If it happens again, I would recommend going through computer audio, but hopefully we'll be all set from here.

MR. SEELEY: Typically, this is the best way for me to go. But if something doesn't work, just interrupt me and I'll fix that again. Apologies everyone. I may backtrack a little bit here. But I think it's important. I was talking about the timeline. I wanted to emphasize that we're working on a very strict timeline, with a goal of having a Public Hearing Document in front of you all at the Joint December meeting.

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We feel, Dustin and I both feel that we can meet this deadline, if we continue to follow the timeline you provided, and make the necessary progress here today. That includes identifying which issues to keep within the Amendment. I'm first going to go through the whole presentation, issue by issue, and then I'm going to return to each slide that indicates action items need to be addressed. As Chris Batsavage indicated earlier on these action items, are mainly points of discussion. We want to hear what the Council and Board think. We don't necessarily need motions to move forward with things, we just need those recommendations. But again, just please keep in mind that the goal here is to identify which issues to include in the amendment, and have the FMAT further pursue. Dustin, just checking in. Are you still following along?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, still with you.

MR. SEELEY: The first issue discussed by the FMAT was the fishery management plan, The FMP Goals and Objectives. Similar to how other FMP Amendments have addressed goals and objectives, the FMAT here plans to recommend one alternative, in addition to the status quo FMP Goals and Objectives.

This is intended to be a working set that we'll go through with revisions at each meeting, as we continue to discuss alternatives. Since this action item will continue to be a work in progress, I don't plan to dwell on the current proposed language. However, if you have had a chance to review the briefing materials, you may already have suggestions or revisions that we would appreciate hearing, once we come back to each of these items.

If available, the FMAT is requesting input on if there are important aspects of the fishery that are not currently captured by the proposed goals and objectives. If a goal and objective should be removed entirely, or if there are any

recommended revisions that you do have. Here I understand there is a lot of text.

This is here mainly for me to come back to if we do decide to dive into things. This is also in the briefing material, and so I don't really want to dwell on these in detail right now. However, as I indicated in the last slide, if anyone has any additional input, we would love to hear it when we return to this item.

But just to give you a little bit more detail. We have broken up these goals and objectives into kind of sub-categories, where the goals here are the overarching aspects we're trying to achieve. The objectives are the steps we can take to ultimately reach our goal, and then the strategies are the approaches we take to meet our objective, and then ultimately our goal.

The second issue are the sector-based allocations. You all have probably seen this slide before, indicating that the original FMP back in 1990 set the allocations at 80 percent recreational, and 20 percent commercial of the total ACL. Then that was revised through Amendment 1 in 1999 that set the allocations to be 83 percent recreational, and 17 percent commercial, developed with data from 1981 to 1989.

The table on the bottom here shows a variety of different time series, using both the new and the old MRIP data. If you reference the Amendment 1 column, under the old MRIP numbers you will see that that is where the 83-17 allocation is developed from. If the new MRIP data was used for that same time series, the allocation would be closer to 90 percent recreational, 10 percent commercial. Then you can see what the other time series look like when you use the new MRIP numbers as you continue across the table. Under this sector allocation issue, the FMAT is requesting feedback on a variety of different topics. If you pay attention to the headings that I have over

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the next few slides, you'll see they are all related to this Issue 2, Sector Allocation, but there are a few different topics within that that would help you follow along.

If you do have the FMAT Summary in front of you, we're essentially following along that table that is available. We're requesting feedback on which time series should be considered for further development. Is there a specific time series that Council and Board members are more interested in seeing, and how can we revise that as we continue to move along?

Their FMAT recommendation is to use a time series with a minimum of ten years, it helps encompass more of the history of what's been going on, for recent history that is within the fishery. For the commercial/recreational split, the FMAT recommends catch-based allocation, since the fishery is predominantly allocated to the recreational sector, as opposed to the landings-based allocations that are currently in place in Amendment 1.

Then to go a little bit further, just because the FMAT is requesting catch-based allocations, obviously doesn't mean that is the only allocation that needs to be presented, so we would love some feedback on if the catch and landings-based allocations should be further developed. Still under the same issue, the commercial and recreational allocation, but now focusing a little bit more to help us understand how to develop these alternatives.

We need to talk about discards, and this is something that has been brought up at previous Council and Board meetings, where there are two different methods of calculating recreational discards for management use. The FMAT is now requesting guidance on which approach to use. You know they feel it's time we really hone in on this and try to understand one solid method.

The two different methods that are available are the one used by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, where they use weight-at-length data from MRIP, the American Littoral Society Tag Releases, and Voluntary Angler Surveys from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. The Science Center method is what is used in the stock assessment.

We then have the MRIP method, which is what is used by GARFO for catch accounting, and this is what was also used to set the 2020 to 2021 specifications. Ultimately, which method should be used in developing those catch-based allocations? The final part of Issue 2 that the FMAT is requesting input on are to develop sector allocations.

Which other options should we potentially consider? There are a few different options that were proposed that have not really been dove into yet, those being a trigger-based approach. This could look something like where you have a catch up to a specified ABC level using one set of allocation percentages, and any additional allowable catch above the level would be allocated differently between the sectors.

There are also socioeconomic approaches we can take, and then we wanted to survey to see if there are any other approaches that the Council and Board would like us to look into. Transitioning now to the third issue, the commercial allocations to the states. Similarly, you've seen this slide before in Amendment 1. In 1999 we developed these allocations from 1981 to 1989 data, and trends in state harvest have shifted, especially with annual state-to-state transfers in recent years. The table on the bottom here, the top row are the states. The second row are the current allocations that are present due to Amendment 1. Then there is a ten and a three-year time series there for reference. The colors are indicating the average state share that is more than one standard

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deviation below or above allocation percent in the fishery management plan.

Here you can kind of see which states have been using more of their quota through the transfer provision, and as I move on to the next issue, Issue 4, you'll see the actual transfers that have occurred. You may note that the states that have been having higher allocations, for example Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York, are the states that have been receiving the majority of the transfers as we move forward.

When we return to this, we're going to talk about a few different action items that the FMAT would like input on, specifically if there is any input on a time series that is to be considered. Again, should both catch and landings-based allocations be further developed? However, the FMAT recommends use of landings-based allocations here, and that is in part due to the fact that commercial discards are considered negligible in the stock assessment.

Transitioning to Issue 4, but focusing now on just the commercial state-to-state transfers. I'll get to the sector-based transfers in a couple slides. But here the FMAT commented that the state-to-state transfers are likely to be used less frequently following successful commercial state quota reallocation, but it's still a very useful tool for adaptive management.

In the table below you can see in light gray which states consistently have been receiving quota, in the form of a transfer, and in dark gray which states have consistently sent quota to another state. This is where I was talking about those similarities between the commercial state allocations and these transfers that have been occurring.

It's important to note that the majority of public opinion supports the ability to transfer

commercial quota between states. Some action items we're going to need to focus on here that the FMAT is requesting input on. Should this management tool be further developed, if so how? Do we not want to adjust this provision, because it's been a great tool that we've been able to use?

Now focusing on the sector transfers. This is part of Issue 4. I really like this table. I know there is a lot of information on here, but since everyone is in front of their computers, we figured it may be a good representation here. This table is showing all of the sector-based transfers from the recreational to the commercial fishery since 2000. The red rectangle around the column all the way to the right, is there to highlight the percentage of the transfer that is actually used.

Whereas you can see in recent years the percentage of the transfer used is much lower than what has been utilized further back in the time series. At times a transfer occurs even when the commercial sector did not land the initial commercial quota. This indicates that the transfers were not utilized as much as in the years past. However, just because a small percentage of the overall transfer was used or was not used, does not mean that states that often meet their own commercial quota do not appreciate the allocated percentage increase to their specific state quota. As this sector-based transfer comes across from recreational to commercial, it is divided up amongst the states. Some of those states may be using more of that extra little bump than others. I just wanted to note that that is definitely still appreciated here. As we think about the action items we need to address here, the FMAT is requesting guidance on whether additional modifications to the transfer process should be considered.

Some of those modifications could include conditions that allow or prevent those transfers. They could invoke a transfer cap that

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is potentially different than that 10.5 million pounds that is currently set to be the maximum transfer as the commercial quota. Then we also received a lot of comments from the public on potential bidirectional sector transfers.

Right now, we just go from recreational to commercial. There was a lot of input about the transferring potentially from commercial to recreational. The next issue we have to cover is the latest rebuilding plan. The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that rebuilding plan be initiated by November, 2021 for us. That is two years after the notice we received from GARFO.

The FMAT supports removing the rebuilding plan from this Amendment, because of concerns about rushing the development of alternatives. However though, after a lot of review internally, staff recommends leaving rebuilding in the Amendment for now. There are a lot more efficiencies that staff was able to go through, with keeping the development of alternatives together.

There are quite a few different overlapping analyses, and then it sets deadlines for us to work through within this Amendment. As I mentioned, we have our timeline set up now that we can definitely achieve. We're going to have a public hearing document in front of you in December, as long as we continue to proceed as we have set things today.

Then lastly, it's important to note that if we do determine at a later date that the Amendment with rebuilding could not be completed by the two-year deadline, staff would then recommend separation of the rebuilding alternatives from the Amendment, and development of a framework action to rebuild the bluefish stock through a section action at a later date, but still prior to that two-year deadline.

There are multiple opportunities that we'll have to remove this later down the road, if that should be necessary. However, staff recommends that we keep it in thus far. To dive into some of the projections that we have. The FMAT has selected five different projection-shift scenarios to request of the stock assessment scientists at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. The first one is a constant harvest approach of 7,300 metric tons, is what our current ABC is.

Through some initial reviews of this, we've noted that if these measures stayed exactly the same the management measures (blank space for a second) variety of initial assumptions. But that would get us to the estimated SSB, the spawning stock biomass our target of over 200,000 metric tons.

Additional projections that have been requested are a constant fishing mortality that rebuilds the stock within ten years and seven years, and then also constant harvest strategies that will allow the fishery to rebuild within the ten-year timespan, but that allow for the highest catch possible. Then finally, the Council has a risk policy that we have to follow, so we are requesting a projection that follows that risk policy, which is a rebuilding strategy that utilizes the P-star approach.

This considers the risk of overfishing, given the current stock biomass compared to the target biomass. The action items we need to target here; are additional projection scenarios needed, do we want to review anything else, and then should the rebuilding plan be removed or kept within the Amendment?

I'm nearing towards the end here, as I get into Issue 6, but there again there are two main topics that the FMAT focused on. In the first here is Sector Specific Management Uncertainty. As previously discussed, there is no standard across all management groups on

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how recreational discard projections are estimated.

This leads to very different discard projections. The FMAT is recommending further development of sector-specific management uncertainty. I'll have a visual for you in the next slide to kind of hone in on this. But there is no accepted standard on how recreational discard projections are estimated. Therefore, our recreational management uncertainty is high.

However, the commercial management uncertainty remains low. You've seen this flow chart before. As it stands, any concerns regarding sector-specific management uncertainty may only be addressed by increasing that management uncertainty for both sectors. You can see our ABC equals our ACL here, and then management uncertainty is taken out.

There is no sector-specific aspect of this. The proposal that is being made here is to shift this flow chart to look something like this, where your ABC still equals your ACL, and then you have your sector split. But each sector split has their own management uncertainty. There is a recreational and a commercial, and we would love to receive some feedback on this as we move forward.

The last issue and topic that we need to talk about are related to the for-hire sector separation. This is only needed if the Council and Board decide that they want separate allocations and separate accountability. If you're only looking for separate measures that is something that we already have, and did not need to include in the Amendment.

But again, if you're looking for sector separation the FMAT will need further guidance. The FMAT noted that an allocation based on a recent time series, which is how we've been doing things in the past, would result in a share

of less than 3 percent to the for-hire sector. There are two major factors that influence the development of the sub-ACL for the for-hire sector.

That would be choosing an appropriate time series, and then selecting which data to base allocations on. However, again we may not need to have separate allocations, because we do have these separate measures, which have been developed and revised through specifications and will continue to be developed and revised through specs, as we need to try to target our ACLs. Again, FMAT is requesting feedback on whether this should be further pursued, with the understanding that we already have those separate measures for the for-hire sector, and the ability to change those measures through specs. Remove this, pursue it further, or allocations again could be based on landings or catch, and then the sector allowance. It is beneficial to further develop a policy on how separate measures are developed.

There are different aspects of accountability, et cetera. Then the FMAT is concerned about obviously the fair and equitable access across user groups, so that is something we need to keep in mind. Now the last slide, just next steps and questions. As Dustin indicated, you know we have a timeline set. It's a very strict timeline that we can definitely meet to have our public hearing document prepared by December. As you can see, you know the FMAT is going to continue to meet. We'll present draft alternatives in June, refine them in July.

In August we'll present those to you, and hopefully approve for a public hearing document, and then actually have that document in front of you at the joint December meeting. With that Mr. Chairman that concludes the presentation. I believe Dustin and I would first, if it's okay with you, accept

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questions on the presentation itself first. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thank you Dustin and Matt, for the very comprehensive presentation on the scoping comments, and the FMAT recommendations, and feedback they are seeking. Yes, I will open it up to the Board and Council for just questions on Dustin and Matt's presentation. I'm not looking for any input on specific issues at this time. That will be coming up after this. Does anyone have any questions?

MS. KERNS: Chris, I'm going to read the names that I see with hands raised, for the Commissioners and Council members for now, and if you don't hear me call your name, please somehow indicate either by speaking up or what not, if repeatedly I don't call your name. I have John McMurray, Tony DiLernia, Joe Cimino, Peter DeFur, and Adam Nowalsky.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: We'll start with John McMurray.

MR. JOHN G. McMURRAY: I had a question about catch versus landing-based allocations. It was mentioned that the catch based captures the catch and release aspect of the recreational fishery. But what exactly does that mean? It just captures dead discards, or it captures all releases?

MR. COLSON LEANING: I can take that one.

MR. SEELEY: Yes, go ahead, Dustin.

MR. COLSON LEANING: In terms of commercial/recreational allocation. If you base allocations on just landings, you're looking at dividing up the fishery based on what people are taking home with them. But I guess that the argument from a few commenters was that the fishery itself is of greater importance for recreational fishermen than it is represented by just landings-based allocation, because you

have all of those fish that were released. Some of those fish died, there is a discard mortality ratio.

Typically, as is the case with scup being an example, allocation is based on landings plus dead discards. You know there is the potential for looking at all discards. However, to my knowledge that isn't as common practice, but it is a possibility.

MR. McMURRAY: Okay so, I'm sorry Mr. Chairman, can I ask a follow up?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes sure, go ahead.

MR. McMURRAY: Just trying to understand what you said. It could be landings plus dead discards, or landings plus all releases when you're considering different allocation scenarios.

MR. COLSON LEANING: I believe so. However, standard practice using scup as an example was that landings plus dead discards. In that sense, you know if you do a catch-based allocation there is incentive to reduce your dead discards, to practice better release practices, such as circle hooks and so on, which would help reduce that dead discard amount, and be able to utilize more of your quota in landings instead of dead discards.

MR. McMURRAY: That was useful, thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next is Tony DiLernia, and I forget who is on deck.

MR. ANTHONY DiLERNIA: I have a couple questions regarding the release mortality, and I may have a follow up after I receive my answer, if I may, Mr. Chairman. Matt, could you just please review again how the release is calculated by both the Fisheries Science Center, you mentioned two methods of calculating release, or two values that are used. There is a

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value that is generated by Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and a second value that's generated by the MRIP process. Can you please review for me what goes into the development of each of those different values?

MR. SEELEY: Yes Tony, thanks for your question. That is a great question, a very important topic for us. Just before I answer that. I do believe we have Tony Wood on the line, who is the stock assessment scientist at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. He definitely would be able to speak, obviously in much more detail than I can, about the Science Center method. Toni Kerns, or someone. If there is any way to allow Tony Wood to have an open phone line that would be great if he could address that.

MS. KERNS: Do you know if he is listed as Anthony Wood?

MR. DiLERNIA: I see Anthony Wood in the listing of names.

MS. KERNS: Okay, I see it. His microphone is open. Tony.

MR. SEELEY: Prior to just the Science Center method, Tony DiLernia. The MRIP approach that we have here is to actually go in and do the simple query that we always do of the B-2s, and those B-2s are all of the released fish, and then the 15 percent accepted mortality rate that has been used in the recent history, is what we apply to those overall B-2s to estimate the recreational dead discards. That's what we do to look at the MRIP estimates to get the discards. If Tony Wood's line is open, I'm sure he would be happy to explain the Science Center approach.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: If you're available, please go ahead.

MS. KERNS: He's unmuted, but it sounds like we cannot hear him.

MR. COLSON LEANING: He just wrote in the questions box saying he's trying to speak.

MR. SEELEY: While Tony Wood is trying to get that going, Tony DiLernia, the information that I do have that I can articulate is that they use a variety of different data, like weight at length data to incorporate here. They use some of the MRIP data that is available, the American Littoral Society Tag Releases.

Then they also have Volunteer Angler Surveys from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. Then I believe they incorporate some seasonality to there as well. Then Tony has a spread sheet that he uses to generate the discards that they actually do use in the stock assessment.

MR. DiLERNIA: Okay thank you. First of all, I would like to point out that using the data that the Northeast Fisheries Science Center processed will skew the number of fish that are released, for two reasons. Number one, using the American Littoral Society information. That Society is one which is devoted to and promotes, and is most recognized for the process of catch and release fishing.

Their current website lists that there are approximately 1,000 of their members are active taggers, and that 15,000 tags a year are typically deployed. I don't believe that is representative of the bluefish fishery coastal water, I believe that skews the release data significantly. Also, if I recall from a previous council meeting when there was some discussion regarding the volunteer tagging program.

I seem to think that the number of individuals involved in that voluntary tagging program, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, was

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low. It was so low; I remember thinking to myself that it's probably significantly insignificant. It's for that reason that I would continue to support using, although I don't really like MRIP, I believe of the two processes, I believe the MRIP data is less biased in coming up with a release mortality. I'll mute myself unless there are any questions.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: We will certainly talk a little more about that as well as the other action items that the FMAT is looking for from us today. Toni Kerns, who do we have next in the queue?

MS. KERNS: I think we have Tony Wood connected, and Tony DiLernia, your microphone is not muted, just to let you know. There you go. Tony Wood, are you there?

DR. KATIE DREW: This is Katie Drew, the Commission's scientist who works on the bluefish assessment. Can I just make a comment in response to that question, really quick?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, really quick, and I think in the interest of time after this Katie, if we can connect with Tony Wood, he can chime in later when we come back to that. But yes, Katie, please go ahead right now.

DR. DREW: I just wanted to make sure that people understood the difference between what the Science Center is doing and GARFO is doing is not about the total numbers of fish released, it's about how you translate that numbers into the weight of fish. The volunteer angler programs and the Littoral Society data are strictly going in to help calculate what the average size of a fish released, and we're using the total numbers and the same discard mortality rate that GARFO was using, rather than trying to calculate a new set of numbers.

But because MRIP had very limited sample size data on the size of fish that are released, and we know that the size of fish that are released are different than the size of fish harvested, we use a wider range of data to get a better average size. Although we do recognize that of course the people who are filling out those volunteer angler logbook surveys, and the Littoral Society tagging program, are maybe not as representative of the whole population, in terms of the size of fish that they release. But it's not about coming up with a new number of fish that are released.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks Katie that is an important point for all of us to understand on those two methodologies. Toni Kerns, who do we have next on the queue?

MS. KERNS: We have Joe Cimino then Peter deFur, Adam Nowalsky and then Justin Davis.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Joe Cimino, you're up.

MR. JOE CIMINO: Thanks Matt and Dustin. I have plenty of comments which I'll hold. The question I have right now is MRFSS transfers, and maybe this goes to Matt. Is there a deadline, a time deadline on when that stops? If a state just went over slightly, and they didn't realize it until the end of 2019, or January of 2020. Would they be able to request from a state that still had quota, sort of a paper exercise in January or February of the following year to do a transfer, or does it not even matter?

MR. SEELEY: Thanks for that question, Joe. That's a great question. Unfortunately, since I'm not the one that facilitates those transfers, I believe that would be GARFO and then state agencies that someone else may be better well versed to answer that question. I don't know if Cynthia Ferrio with GARFO would be able to tackle that or maybe Mike Ruccio.

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CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: If someone from GARFO can answer that question for Joe Cimino, if they can. I know being a federally managed species there are some restrictions on when quota transfers can happen, usually a December 15th cutoff, but I'll see if someone from GARFO can provide some more information on that.

MS. KERNS: Mike Pentony has his hand raised to do so; I believe.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Mike.

MR. MICHAEL PENTONY: Yes, you just stated the date, it's December 15. Every year we get a letter out to all the states, reminding everyone. Any in-season transfers of quota for either bluefish or summer flounder should be submitted to us by December 15th, which ensures that we can get the transfer in place by the end of the calendar year.

The one accommodation we have for kind of late season or after the fishing year transfers is for any unexpected situations, you know for vessel safety or harbor safety. We often get some end of December vessel can't land in Carolina, so Virginia will get a request for a safe harbor type transfer. Those we authorize after the end of the year, but for simple quota management purposes, December 15 is the deadline.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Joe, did you have a follow up on that?

MR. CIMINO: No, I'm good, thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Who do we have up next, and I just want to remind folks that I guess if you think about the questions you want to ask about the presentation now, definitely feel free to do that. We'll take a few more. If your questions are probably better suited for providing input to the FMAT, I ask that you hold

those so we allow enough time to give Matt and Dustin the input they need to go back to the FMAT. Toni, who do we have next on the queue?

MS. KERNS: WE have Peter deFur, Adam Nowalsky, and Justin Davis, and Matt Seeley, just a reminder to mute your phone when you're not talking.

MR. PETER deFUR: I have a question for Matt. Matt you mentioned that I think the FMAT or maybe staff recommended including the rebuilding plan in this Amendment action, if I understood that correctly. Could you explain what the advantage to that is, and why go through that administrative direction as opposed to a different one?

MR. SEELEY: Thanks for that question, Peter. You kind of brought up part of it that makes great sense too is the administrative direction. You know there is potentially no need to remove the rebuilding plan from the Amendment and put that administrative burden out there right now, because the way that the rebuilding plan is set up is to be initiated when this Amendment should be going into its conclusion.

The timeline is set up perfectly right now, where things are going to be flowing along. On top of that there is analyses that are going to be conducted that are somewhat overlapping, between what is necessary for the rebuilding plan and the rest of the issues within the Amendment. Then even further, this aspect of the rebuilding plan can be removed from the Amendment at any point that we feel we may not hit this deadline, or this needs to be targeted in a different way.

Then that could be addressed through some other action that the Council can uptake. You know maybe a framework action or something like that to be completed within that same

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timeline. But again, just to reiterate the fact that the timeline that we have set up thus far includes the rebuilding plan being implemented within the deadlines that we have to abide by through what Magnuson says.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, I just want to clarify that was a staff recommendation. The FMAT's recommendation did differ, and they thought that it should be broken out to allow more time for development of Amendment alternatives. But yes, I just wanted to make that distinction.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is Adam Nowalsky.

MR. ADAM NOWALSKY: Early in the presentation there was a slide that offered feedback from the public during scoping about number of comments received in favor of commercial allocation increasing, commercial allocation decreasing, recreational allocation increasing, and recreational allocation decreasing.

What I noticed is that the number, I would have expected that people that were in favor of one sector or the other have an increasing allocation, would have translated to a similar comment related to the allocation decreasing for the other sector. What I'm wondering here is that when people offered input about an increase for one sector allocation to the other. Where were they recommending that allocation come from, if it wasn't related to a decrease in the other sector allocation, and vice versa?

MR. COLSON LEANING: I can take a first stab at it. It's sometimes challenging to place comments into specific categories. Matt and I did discuss the kind of, in a way it seems like having four categories with increasing and decreasing each sector. It's kind of duplicative. But a lot of comments that we grouped into these categories were often saying like, the

recreational sector needs more allocation for this, this, and this reason.

I don't believe at least in some of the comments that they were necessarily saying that the commercial sector should see a decrease, while the recreational sector sees an increase. A lot of comments were just kind of calling for a liberation of landings for their particular sector. Some of that may stem from just a misunderstanding on how allocations are done, the fact that it is like a zero-sum game.

We went back and forth on how to display this information, but we thought with a lot of comments, specifically only addressing a need for an increase or greater access within a specific fishery that we should present it this way. I don't know if Matt you can expand upon that.

MR. NOWALSKY: I think all I was looking for is was there a piece of information we as managers needed to have from this process, whereby if a comment advocated for an increase in one side, but not necessarily a decrease in the other. Was there a recommendation that went along with these for some other allocation mechanism, or if there was a decrease in an allocation that whatever wasn't utilized should be left for conservation benefit, or something else. I think that was what I'm most interested in knowing, in understanding how to interpret these comments.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Probably won't have a real answer for that. Kind of hard to figure, but I think we'll have to work through that. Next up is Justin Davis. Who was that? We'll go with Justin Davis.

DR. JUSTIN DAVIS: Matt, I was wondering if you could put up the slide again that had the different projections to inform the rebuilding plan. I'm hoping you can talk a little bit about

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the difference between a constant F and a constant harvest strategy, and how that intersects with the specification setting process, and the degree to which either of those strategies are informed by stock assessment updates that might come during the ten-year rebuilding plan.

Also, not having been through this process before with implementation of one of these ten-year rebuilding plans, is the idea that at the onset of the rebuilding plan you decide on a certain strategy for the rebuilding plan, and then that strategy remains fixed for the entire ten-years, or do you have the ability to adjust course during the ten-year period, depending on how the stock is responding?

MR. SEELEY: Yes, thanks for that question, Justin. I'm going to try to tackle that as best as I can. I obviously haven't been through one of these rebuilding plans yet either, so I'm going to look to some of my colleagues here who have experienced that for some support as we go through, whether that's GARFO or any other Council staff, or State Directors that have experience here.

Yes, the constant F that is relating to obviously the fishing mortality. Keeping certain levels of fishing consistent over the time periods, to see what the ABC would be over ten years. We have the same thing there for seven years. My understanding is that we continue to go through the spec cycle as normal, while trying to follow along with its rebuilding plan.

The SSC and the Advisory Panel and Monitoring Committee will also go through their same processes, where they review the specs and things get adjusted over time. But these rebuilding plans are set just to show you what the tentative plan would be for how things will change over time, and you know it is reviewed each year, and the specs are set every couple of years, while that review process is going.

This is all while trying to follow along with this ten, or seven, or however many years rebuilding plan that is actually set. I think that kind of answers one of your questions, and I'm again going to look to anyone else if anyone can kind of bolster that. Then I believe the difference here between the constant F vs the constant harvest would be the ABC here.

Fishing mortality may be at the same level, but if our spawning stock biomass is different that pressure is going to change according to what our SSB is like, whereas constant harvest would be trying to maintain the same harvest level across the entire rebuilding plan. Having that catch be essentially as high as possible each year, over ten years, and this is mainly as a reference point for us to try to understand where these rebuilding projections are looking.

We don't have these rebuilding projections yet at our disposal. They are still being developed, and the projections are being run by the Science Center. At the next FMAT meeting, if you want to listen in, or you can see the report. All of that information will be presented back to the Council and Board with the actual parameters and information that we need under each plan. That is pretty much what I've got for you here. If anyone else wants to add to that I would appreciate any additional support.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Does anyone else have anything to add on to what Matt just said? Okay if not, Toni, anyone else in the queue for questions?

MS. KERNS: You do not have anyone else in the queue. There are no other Commissioners with their hands raised. During the presentation there was a member of the public that reached out that said that they wanted to comment. I don't know if you want to wait to take public comment until later, Chris, or if you plan on taking comments at some point later.

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CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I would like to wait until the end, because I know that we have to work through these items. I'll definitely try to set some time aside at the end for public comment.

**PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO PDT/FMAT ON  
BLUEFISH ALLOCATION AND REBUILDING  
DRAFT AMENDMENT**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Now, Dustin and Matt will go back through the presentation to slides that have items in red, so the Council and Board can address all the FMAT questions and recommendations that will eventually help guide the development of the alternatives. Dustin and Matt, the floor is yours again.

MR. SEELEY: Dustin if you want, I can just tackle this first one, then we can just go along and see how this goes. The first issue are obviously the FMP Goals and Objectives. This is the Action Item slide. As I go through this, I'm just going to leave this slide up there for those of you that haven't had a chance to reference it yet.

As I mentioned, we don't really want to dwell on this, because the way that we plan on doing the, and when I say we I'm referring to the FMAT. The way that the FMAT is planning on proposing these options, they are not even alternatives, is by having the status quo FMP Goals and Objectives, and then one set of revised goals and objectives. Just to spend maybe a minute or two here. I know we have a lot to get through.

We're curious if there are any initial thoughts on any important aspects of the fishery that are not currently captured by these proposals and objectives. Do you think there is a goal or objective that should be removed entirely, or is there any recommended revision? I would just recommend, Chris if we can leave this up for a couple seconds, see if anyone has any thoughts.

If not, we can move on, and this will be addressed again as we talk about alternatives.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, we could do that. Any input from the Board and Council on the proposed Goals and Objectives?

MS. KERNS: Right now, I see two hands raised, John McMurray and Adam Nowalsky.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: John McMurray:

MR. McMURRAY: Regarding the first goal, Ensure the biological sustainability of the bluefish resource in order to maintain a sustainable bluefish fishery. Achieve and maintain a sustainable spawning stock biomass rate of fishing mortality, and then B is, promote catch and release within the recreational fishery. I'm trying to understand why that is in there. I mean of course it's already primarily a release fishery, somewhere upwards up 70 percent, I think. I think the intent is to try and communicate the importance of the release fishery. Well it's economically, and I think you used the word intrinsically important. But I don't think it does that very well, and I'm just wondering what the thought process was for including that and what the reason for including it was.

MR. SEELEY: Go ahead Dustin.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Go ahead, Matt. I was just saying that I think we got a lot of comments on public scoping about the importance of released fish, and I think just a continuation of promoting circle hooks, or anything we can do to keep discard mortality down, as well as the concept of maybe a catch-based allocation. These are all things that can promote catch and release within the recreational fishery. I think that is why it was included, since it seemed to be a reoccurring theme.

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MR. McMURRAY: Okay that makes sense. I'm not going to dwell on it, but presumably we're going to have a chance to tweak these. I certainly don't want to get into wordsmithing right now. But that is the intent, right?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, we'll be revisiting these as well as the FMAT. This is just kind of a first take, and if there is anything that is a big theme that needs to be changed, or something completely left out. That is what we're looking for here. We'll continue working on wordsmithing as we move forward through the process.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Adam Nowalsky.

MR. NOWALSKY: Following in that same theme on this proposed strategy 1.2. I would recommend that 1.2 be modified, specifically referencing promoting reduction in discards in the catch and release, unless it is the intent of the FMAT that the goal and strategy should be to promote catch and release.

If the latter is in fact the case, I would ask that the FMAT come back to the management body with some examples of some other fisheries under management, where some similar goal is being utilized to help inform us that that is the direction that we intend to go. My preference is not to have this as a goal that we're specifically promoting it.

But again, I'm willing to consider it if there is some sound rationale presented why. If it is in fact the intention to focus more on minimizing discards, making that catch and release aspect of the fishery more responsible, relative to resource health. Then I would definitely encourage work on modifying it a such.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Are there any other comments, questions, input from the Board and Council on the proposed FMP Goals and Objectives?

MS. KERNS: I have Jason McNamee, Phil Langley, Eric Reid, and Tom Fote, and then John McMurray again. Jason and Phil have their hands up and took them down. I don't know if it was by accident or not.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay so I think if memory serves me, next is Eric Reid.

MR. ERIC REID: If we're going to promote catch and release within the recreational fishery, we have to minimize dead discards. I'm following on Adam's point, I guess. But if that language is going to remain, we have to do something to minimize dead discards in a catch and release fishery, if we're going to promote that. I don't see that in there anywhere.

MR. SEELEY: That's a great point, Eric. Chris, I just want to emphasize. You guys are hitting on a great point. This is kind of the feedback that we're looking for here, where you know we're not wordsmithing anything right now, but you're giving us these suggestions on how we can revise this language as we continue to move forward, so thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks for that clarification, Matt. Yes, I think really, it's key today to make sure we provide the input that the FMAT needs, make sure we're on the right track. Confirming we're on the right track is definitely helpful at this stage. Next up is Tom Fote.

MR. THOMAS P. FOTE: Yes, I guess I'm going to be jumping on the same point. I don't think it's our job to promote (very low volume)

MS. TINA L. BERGER: Tom, we're having trouble hearing you.

MR. FOTE: Can you hear me better now?

MR. COLSON LEANING: It's very distant.

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MS. BERGER: You're better now though.

MR. FOTE: Yes, I changed my microphone from one spot to another, hold on one second. Is that better?

MS. BERGER: Much.

MR. FOTE: Basically, what I'm saying is we are not in the job of promoting catch and release fisheries, we're basically in the position of telling people if they're going to catch and release, they need to do it in the best manner that is available. I think that is what that 1.2 should be changed to, because we're in the business of allowing people to fish, and what they do with their fish is up to them. But we should be telling them, if you're going to do just catch and release, you better do it in the way that causes the least damage to the fishery.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I appreciate those comments. Toni, anyone else in the queue for Proposals and Objectives?

MS. KERNS: John McMurray.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Oh yes, sorry. John McMurray.

MR. McMURRAY: No that's okay. I put my hand down and then put it back up. I would just, instead of beating a dead horse. FMAT really needs to clarify what promoting catch and release within the recreational fishery means. I think a good explanation was provided to me. It just needs to go in this document somehow. I'm certainly not opposed to minimizing discard mortality as being part of that. But that doesn't appear like that was the meaning behind this, or the fuss behind this. It just needs further clarification, thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: If there aren't any more questions and input, Matt and Dustin, did

you get what you needed for the Goals and Objectives issue?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, that is a good start, and what we needed to revise.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, and this is a reminder. We'll get another bite off the apple for the Goals and Objectives when we have this come back to us, right?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Exactly.

MR. SEELEY: There will be a few more opportunities.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes thanks, I think that's important to know. Time is of the essence, but this isn't all set in stone today. If you want to move on to the Action Items for Issue 2, please?

MS. KERNS: Chris Batsavage, just really quick. I just want to make sure Phil Langley didn't want to speak. He had his hand up, it went down, it went back up again, it went back down again. I wasn't sure if there was trouble with the hand raising button for him or not.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, we'll quickly circle back to Phil Langley then. Phil.

MR. PHIL LANGLEY: Yes, thanks Chris and thanks Toni. But no, I took it back down. They kind of touched based already on what I was going to discuss, and that was with the use of circle hooks in the catch and release fishery. But I think we've got time to dig deeper into that as we move forward.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, so Matt and Dustin I'll move on to Issue 2, Action Items, please.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Here we'll start off with direction on what types of time series should be

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considered for further development. We've received some guidance from the FMAT on a suggestion of looking at time series that are of ten years or greater, just to account for the cyclical nature of the stock. But what types of analyses are Board members and Council members interested in? Are we looking at three different approaches where we look at something recent, something over a long time period, or something more just like updating the old base years? We'll start with that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there any input from the Board and Council on the commercial and recreational allocations issue?

MS. KERNS: Okay we have Jason McNamee, Tom Fote, and Joe Cimino.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Jason McNamee.

DR. JASON McNAMEE: I had a question about, well I'll make it a question/comment. I think of the recommendations of the FMAT in high regard. This one I'm struggling a little bit. I see that they recommend the minimum of ten-year time series. However, given that the majority of this fishery is recreational, and we only have a couple of years where they did that calibration experiment, where we actually have the data calibrated on actual side-by-side comparisons of the old method and the new method for MRIP.

I was thinking that that shorter five-year time period might be a little bit better, because there is more of the, I guess empirical information between the two, rather than just the straight calibration on which to extend that time period out. That is my comment, and the question is did the FMAT discuss that aspect of this at all, or is this more based on the variability? The normal concept is with the more years you lump in, the more it kind of tamps down the year to year variability.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt and Dustin, did FMAT talk about that point at all?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, the main consideration there was the year to year variability. You know five years is still a decent amount of time. The point that you brought up is a good one, and that wasn't brought up, so that is an important consideration, and we can look into a more recent time series, so I appreciate that.

DR. McNAMEE: If I could follow up, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, go ahead.

DR. McNAMEE: I know all we're doing at this point is trying to sort of hone in a little bit, to refine the number of options. I think it's fair to leave in ten year, and I would prefer the five year stay in. If there was a desire to, I think dropping the longer time period I would be okay with that. Then just a final comment is on the catch versus landings.

I like the idea of adding in the catch basis. I guess my recommendation at this point would be to leave both versions in the landings, because that is kind of a more typical approach. But given the focus on catch and release that you just had a couple minutes ago. I like the idea of having this catch in their catch basis as well. My recommendation is to leave them both.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is Tom Fote.

MR. FOTE: Yes, I'm not surprised that I don't agree with Jason, because I was around when we started putting the bluefish plan in the late eighties. At that point we had a fishery that didn't have recreational or commercial restrictions on it. It was just the amount of fish being caught. When we started putting the regulations in '95, it effected the catch figures, because we put a ten-fish bag limit on the

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recreational, complying the commercial through quotas.

Then as we went on, we transferred quotas to allow a bigger catch by the commercial sector. The only real base year they have that basically looked at an unrestricted fishery was way back when. It is also interesting that when we put the regulations in place, and if you look at the numbers, the chart you put up earlier.

Back in the eighties we had these great numbers until 1989, when we started talking about what we were going to put in. Also, you see that the fishery started going down, down dramatically in the numbers of fish. It wasn't fishing pressure that was pushing it, there was some other reason why, was it cyclical or the amount of forage species available.

The stock started crashing. I'm looking at the 38-year table you just put up, and that surely reflects what it was without, because remember when we first put the thing, it was a ten-fish bluefish limit in, until 2000 and I think it was 3 or 4, when we allowed states that wanted to go to a 15.

You basically restricted the recreational catch, and then you started transferring unused recreational quota to increase the commercial catch. Anyway, I just figured I would get that on the record, because I always kid Jim McKuen. He put the ten-fish bag limit in and then fish started going the opposite direction. I said, see what happens when you put regulations on the fishery, you start collapsing it.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: To speak to the slide. I do have some concern with the catch based, so I would like to see both continue to be developed, although I'll go on record right now as saying that I wouldn't want to leave this meeting without hearing anything other than this needs

to be decoupled from the rebuilding plan, which obviously needs to move forward, and we need to spend more time on this.

I mean this is a very tough decision. The majority of people were talking status quo. We're proceeding with two other species, or three really that are looking at this that are pursuing a whole host of different options. I think really, we should be walking the bluefish discussion on commercial and recreational, along with summer flounder, scup, and sea bass instead.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Toni, are there anymore Board and Council members with input on this issue?

MS. KERNS: Yes, we have Mike Luisi here.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Go ahead, Mike.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: To that point that Joe just made. I'm just wondering how this fits in with the commercial/recreational allocation issues that we're dealing with, well we're going to deal with after lunch today. I wanted to put it out there and maybe get your thoughts, and maybe staff's thoughts about how we could, I don't know bring all of this together.

I do have concerns that we're going to find ourselves in a place where we're going to be dealing with allocation issues differently between species, and I would prefer a kind of a standard approach, if we're going to make adjustments. Joe just mentioned it. I wanted to put it out there, maybe get your thoughts.

I don't have the luxury of sitting next to you, and whispering this to you while we're going through the meeting today. But maybe your thoughts about how this commercial/recreational allocation issue kind of couples with the other species that we're

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dealing with as a joint body, and maybe just put it out there to get some feedback on that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I guess that's an important point, one I know I thought of and probably others as well as we have the same issue for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. The question is, is it appropriate to have different options or strategies for addressing the commercial and recreational allocation for bluefish, compared to summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, or should they be more aligned? Yes, I think any thoughts from the Board and Council on that to provide the FMAT at this point, I think would be really helpful. Does anyone have any thoughts on that?

MR. SEELEY: Chris, this is Matt Seeley. May I just add something here?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes.

MR. SEELEY: Just to emphasize again. You know I want to really bring into play the timeline that we're working with here. We have a very, very strict timeline. We're following along with it as necessary. The FMAT already has meetings set up, as we continue to move along with goals and sub-goals at each point, to have all of our alternatives ready, which encompasses all of the necessary action and review and analyses necessary to come up with those alternatives.

Keeping in mind the fact that we do have this timeline that rebuilding fits within it, and that these alternatives are going to be developed following along with that. You know the FMAT feels comfortable knowing that we can proceed as is. I just want to emphasize that and make everyone comfortable that staff is okay with the associated work that is coming along with this.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other input from the Board and Council on Issue 2?

MS. KERNS: You have Tony DiLernia.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Tony DiLernia.

MR. TONY DiLERNIA: I support what Matt just said. I agree with him there. Also, I would like to point out to something that Chairman Luisi just brought up. I understand the need to try to be consistent across all the fisheries. But when you look at the bluefish fishery, the percentage division between the commercial and recreational. It's significantly greater than the percentage distribution for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. While for those fisheries I could see developing a single policy. As far as the bluefish is concerned, because there is such a large difference to the percentage allocations, I believe it would be appropriate to have perhaps a slightly different policy.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I appreciate that comment, and I think yes, it's going to be kind of how we have to look at this. If we do go a different route for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, why is that? What are the differences, and you just mentioned one compared to the other three species? Any other Council and Board members with input on Issue 2?

MS. KERNS: I do not see any other hands raised.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt and Dustin, let's see you still need some input on the discard aspect of this, right?

MR. SEELEY: Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman. We still have two other slides that are related to Issue 2. However, it is still just general input following along this process that will affect each issue. Yes, Dustin sorry to interrupt, go ahead.

MR. COLSON LEANING: No, you got it Matt, just some guidance if possible, on which. Since

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we've received some interest in developing catch-based allocations, along with landings-based allocations, and guidance on which method should be used for calculating the dead discards would be appreciated.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: There was a question asked about this earlier, and we did discuss this pretty thoroughly at the October meeting. I think Tony DiLernia accurately described some of the issues with the two different methods, in terms of you know who is collecting the fish, where the fish are coming from.

One issue is the volunteer angler survey, and ALS data doesn't cover the entire range of bluefish. You know larger bluefish are found in the northern end of the range where the data is being collected, versus the southern. The MRIP method assumes that all the released fish are the same exact size as the catch fish, which there is evidence to show that that is probably not always the case.

Any input from the Board and Council on this issue is definitely appreciated. Also, if Tony Wood is able to get his audio to work. If he wanted to use this opportunity now to provide any clarifications for the method the Science Center uses for calculating the discard estimates, I'll offer that to him right now too.

DR. ANTHONY WOOD: Sorry about the earlier issues. I think both Matt and Katie did a good job describing the differences. The reason we use a different method for the stock assessment is because we want to use all of the data that is available to us, including those Volunteer Angler Surveys and the ALS Tag Release Data. Some years we get thousands of measurements, which is valuable data in a stock assessment, especially to inform discard release sizes. At the last benchmark, an analysis comparing discard release sizes versus landed fish sizes show that the discards are actually much larger than the landed fish, which

probably has to do with palatability issues for bluefish when they get really big.

People don't tend to eat them, so they let them go. In order to incorporate all this information into the assessment, we convert those extra thousands of lengths into weights, using length/weight equations. Whereas, for the MRIP method they are using the average weight of bluefish landed to represent their discard weights. That is why in some years there is a huge discrepancy between the two methods.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I'll go ahead and open it up for comments from the Board and Council on how to address discards.

MS. KERNS: You have Jason McNamee, followed by Tony DiLernia, and then followed by Tom Fote and Justin Davis.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Jason.

DR. MCNAMEE: This is a tough one. I think in general the Science Center method is more refined, I think than pick up on variability that is just on a more refined scale. I have a lot more comfort that that is as accurate as we can probably get with regard to this. However, I also understand the pragmatism of the other approach.

My recommendation would be to use the Science Center method. However, in the end you end up with disconnect, because your accountability is going to be calculated potentially using a different method. I don't know. I'm struggling to hone in on not understanding exactly how this will translate into accountability in the future. If it syncs everything up to a single method, then we can get the data in a timely fashion in any given year.

The other kind of hang up is collecting all of the information from the disparate entities that are

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collecting it. On its face I would say I would prefer the Science Center method. However, there is probably some pragmatic reasons why we might want to stick with the MRIP method. I don't know if Dustin or Matt want to speak to that at all. I don't know if what I just said is helpful at all, other than I'm not sure we can get to a spot where I can pick one over the other and move forward.

MR. COLSON LEANING: If you don't mind, Chris, I'll take this one. The allocations, the percentages in the FMP can be based on any data that the Board and Council deems fit. If it seems to be more appropriate to use the Science Center's approach for developing the percentages that is a method that can be pushed forward, or the MRIP method.

However, you're right. When accounting, and when GARFO is doing the catch accounting, we will be using the MRIP method. Perhaps there is some inconsistency or disconnect if we base allocations based off of the Science Center method. But it's really at the discretion of the Board and Council today.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next I have Tony DiLernia.

MR. DiLERNIA: If I understood Mr. Wood correctly, I just heard him say that the Science Center is not as confident in the MRIP information or data compared to their own data and information. Again, I just heard the Science Center say, well you know what, MRIP may not be accurate. If that is the case, I was going to like to apply that thinking and thought to a lot of other pieces of data that are come out of MRIP.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: In all honesty, the issue is more that there are actual lengths of the released fish from the different Volunteer Angler Surveys compared to the MRIP release information, which there are no lengths

associated with it. Yes, I don't know if we're going to be able to really resolve the differences between the two. I have concerns with both, quite frankly. This is probably one of the tougher issues to tackle moving forward, for sure. Next step, oh sorry do you have a follow up, Tony?

MR. DiLERNIA: Just again, the Science Center is saying well you know, I've got some MRIP data, but you know what we're not going to go with that completely. We kind of don't like that. Maybe we'll substitute our own judgment to some of this. If that is the new set of guidelines that we're going to operate under, I've got other suggestions regarding MRIP myself. I'll let it go at that. I don't expect an answer. Just an observation.

MS. KERNS: Chris Batsavage, Jon Hare has his hand up, as does Tony. You may want to go to one of them to respond, perhaps. I lost you, Chris.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Can you hear me? I'll go with Jon Hare and then Tony, if that's okay in that order. Does that work?

DR. JONATHAN HARE: Go with Tony first, and then I'll follow up.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: That works for me. Tony, go ahead.

DR. WOOD: The bluefish assessment doesn't, I wasn't commenting on the reliability of MRIP estimates, because MRIP doesn't provide discard lengths. I'm not sure how my comment got misconstrued that way. We use the best available information to us, and luckily, we have a lot of states that can provide information on those discard lengths.

For the landed fish weight, we use MRIP information. For the discard length information, we draw a variety of different

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surveys from a variety of different states. I just wanted to clarify that and make sure that my comments, they are not directed toward MRIP, they are just directed toward how we gather data for the assessment process.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thank you for that clarification, Tony. John Hare, do you want to follow up?

DR. HARE: Yes, I just would like to reiterate Dr. Wood's response, and it's not saying anything about the quality of MRIP data, it's using all the data that's available to put together the best assessment for Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council and ASMFC to make decisions. It's using all the available information that is available. Thank you, Tony, for your clear answer.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is Tom Fote.

MR. FOTE: I'm looking at what you're using, and like the American Littoral Society Tag Program. Those are from people that mostly catch and release, so they're basically maybe targeting bigger fish. If you're going out to catch and eat, you're targeting smaller fish, so your discards will be a lot smaller.

You know, we change the whole fishery when we started putting bag limits, especially in a state like New Jersey, because what happened when you put ten-fish bag limits. The people that were coming from Pennsylvania, the people that were coming from church groups up north, who used to come down and fill up their coolers with bluefish to basically take home to eat, stopped fishing.

We basically lost all the data from them. They basically didn't come, because they weren't going to pay to go get ten bluefish on a trip. It redirected the anglers that were fishing. Then when you start using volunteer surveys and American Littoral Society, you're getting a

different sector of the recreational fishery. I don't know whether those numbers are minute compared to the overall recreational sector or not.

But if you think about the amount of anglers that are in, say in a state like New Jersey, and look at how many fill out the volunteer survey, and how many are supposed to be, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service, fishing in it. It's a very small percentage, and it's a very different section of the overall fishing body. That is my concern when you start using those surveys, to look like that and to calculate that. Because you're putting strictly biases in them, so that is my concern.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Justin Davis.

DR. DAVIS: I've got a two-part question. The first part is for Tony, and the question is whether peer review panels who have looked at the stock assessments that have used this Northeast Science Center method have had any reservations or comments about that method, or whether they've actually had a chance to look at the two different methods, weigh in one way or the other.

My second question is to staff. Just to clarify, the input that you're looking for right now is just which discard method should we be using to estimate discards to inform catch-based allocation schemes for this issue. We're not making a decision about what method of discard estimation we're going to use going into the future for either stock assessments or specification setting.

DR. WOOD: This is Tony. Regarding the peer review question. Peer reviewers have brought up some of the exact things that the last gentleman prior to you brought up, you know there are inherent biases in these datasets. But through past working groups, it's been decided that it is better to try and get an overall picture

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of discard length information, than relying on the lengths of only landed fish, since analyses have shown that there are differences between the length distribution of landed fish, and the length distribution of discarded fish. In the assessment process we're just trying to get the best picture of that using the best available information. Yes, there are issues with it, and they have been noted in past peer reviews, but the peer reviewers have also agreed with the working groups that we've done the best we can with the information available to best represent those discards.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Dustin and Matt, I think Justin's second question was in terms of just what you're looking for. Justin, I don't know if you want to restate your question again for them.

DR. DAVIS: Yes, sure. I just wanted to clarify that the input that they're seeking right now is just what discard methodology we should use for developing catch-based allocation schemes for this issue in the Amendment. We're not talking about making a decision on what discard methodology is going to be used going forward for stock assessments or specification setting in the future.

MR. COLSON LEANING: That's correct.

MR. SEELEY: I think it may be important to note here. You know this simple decision of either using one approach or wanting to keep both approaches. You know if we were to use both approaches that obviously will double the work that goes into the allocations here, which is fine. But I just want to make sure that that is understood.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Based on that I probably shouldn't even ask this question, but I think just kind of thinking ahead, because obviously this issue won't get resolved today. But has there been any discussion, either by the

Science Center or GARFO or the FMAT on, you have these two different methods?

They both have caveats associated with them and uncertainty, of looking at what the estimated discard weight would be, like the average, or is that just adding uncertainty to uncertainty? I don't know if anyone had any thoughts on that option, if that has even been considered.

MR. SEELEY: I'll chime in. I don't believe that that has been considered.

MS. KERNS: Jon Hare has his hand up, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, Jon Hare.

DR. HARE: The Science Center and the Regional Office, it's been a topic of conversation at the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council for a couple of years, not specific to bluefish. But just in general in terms of the discard using different methodologies. We are working on an integrated catch-accounting system.

But in this particular case, because it's sort of the weight estimates that are sort of being used, this will probably take a more specific, more focused effort on bluefish. But you know we can talk about it at the next NRCC meeting, if the Mid-Atlantic Council or Atlantic States would like to.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks for that John. Any other input from the Board and Council on the discard portion of this Commercial/Recreational Allocation Issue?

MS. KERNS: Mr. Chairman, we have Eric Reid, John McMurray, and I think Tony DiLernia re-raised his hand, and I'm not sure if Tom Fote has re-raised his hand or not. That is your list.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I'll go to Eric Reid first.

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MR. REID: I have two questions, and honestly, I prefer the Science Center's methodology. I don't really want to get into whether or not MRIP is good or bad, I'm more than happy to do that later on today, I'm sure we'll all look forward to that. But my first question is for Mr. Wood. I just want to know if the results of the assessment can change as it gets updated, since that was a first try with the new MRIP data.

My second question is about what they used for the length/weight conversion. Is there any accounting for inter-seasonal variability in bluefish? Bluefish they come up the coast in May and June that are 30 inches long weigh one thing. That same bluefish four months later is a much more substantial animal. You know I don't know what the percentage change is, but I would be interested to know if there is any sliding scale based on season.

DR. WOOD: The second question yes, we use a seasonal length/weight relationship and apply it to seasonal lengths to cover that issue. What was the first question again?

MR. REID: Sorry, it's do you expect the results of the assessment might change as it gets updated, since it was the first try with the new MRIP data?

DR. WOOD: Not this year, because this year we're just updating data, but during the next management track update yes, the results will change. I'm not going to speculate on the direction, but I do anticipate they will change, as will the reference points.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is John McMurray.

MR. McMURRAY: From what I understand the Science Center method is the more scientifically rigorous one, likely more accurate. It is absolutely true that big fish get released and we

keep the small ones. Very few people in this fishery keep big fish. This appears to be a science question, not a management one. What is the best available science? That is what we should be required to use. We shouldn't pick the one that makes things easier, we should pick the right one, and at this point it certainly appears that the Science Center method is the right one.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Tony DiLernia, did you have your hand up again for this issue?

MR. DiLERNIA: Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman. Matt is looking for guidance of which method to use. He did say though that they could calculate using both methods, but that it would add additional work. My question is, how much would this delay by doing both methods? The reason I ask that is because I would very much like to see what the difference in the results are using the two different methods. Matthew, can you give some advice if it will be delayed that much by going with both methods?

MR. SEELEY: Yes, thanks for your question, Tony. If you recall from, I believe it was the August meeting when we were last discussing the two different discard approaches. There were definitely substantial differences, I think it was close to 4 million pounds between what the final recreational harvest limit would be.

There is a lot of discrepancy there. But in terms of time and the amount of work. You know this will only be applied to the second issue, maybe applied to the third issue, the commercial allocations to the states. Whatever alternatives we decide to move forward with, you know we've heard ten-year time series, five-year time series.

The longer one we would have those approaches and then also put in front of you the two different methods. I don't think our timeline would be extended much at all for this.

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You know I am confident that staff can get it done under the timeline that we do have now, so short answer, it can be done.

MR. DiLERNIA: Mr. Chairman if I may, I would recommend that we use the ten-year time series. I don't want to go back in 20 or 30 years. That is something I haven't advocated in summer flounder, I haven't advocated in any of the other fisheries, so I'm not going to advocate it here either. Use the ten-year timeline, and I would like to see both methods. I am curious to see what the results would be, the difference in the results of the two methods.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt, I don't know if this will be helpful or not as far as the analysis, looking at the two different methods. As mentioned before, you know the available length data doesn't cover the whole range of bluefish. Would it be helpful to show which state the B2s are coming from in those reference years, to get an idea of how much does the location of the length data align with just the overall B2s, where they're being caught along the coast, or is that just going to muddy up the water, add more time to what you guys needed it?

MR. SEELEY: That's a great question, thanks Mr. Chairman. I think it would definitely be informative. Just to clarify, are you referring from MRIP or from these volunteer surveys?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, we know where the volunteer surveys come from. Maybe ALS it might be dependent on the state in which the volunteer angler lives. But what I was asking for is just the B2 estimates from the different states from MRIP, you know to kind of see how that aligns with the location of the volunteer length data that is the question.

MR. SEELEY: Yes, I can't speak to if that will muddy up the waters yet, but I believe that the FMAT can prepare a table that can present that. It will be available for discussion. We can

develop our alternatives for the next meeting as we planned, have that available that table alongside, and then as we start to refine the alternatives over the following couple months, we can incorporate any other changes that are warranted.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Great, thanks. Tom Fote, did you have your hand up again for this issue?

MR. FOTE: Yes, I did. I'm looking at what Tony said, and I agree with one point that I want to see both. Unlike John McMurray, I don't trust whether the Science Center is more scientifically right than the MRIP's. When you ask people face to face when you do the intercepts, you are at least getting a person has to answer the question standing in front of you.

Again, it's not the different people that are in the volunteer surveys, which are basically a separate class altogether. I don't know if that's the best scientific. I don't disagree with science, it's a good way of obtaining information. But I don't know whether it's best or not. Then the second thing, I disagree with Tony. I think we should look at the long term, just because history is an important part of this fishery, and I don't want to forget the history.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt and Dustin, did you get what you need from the Board and Council as far as moving forward on Issue 2?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, it sounds like we'll be running both analyses, so just moving on to the next number of action items I think would be helpful, since you've got a lot to get through today.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, we do. Before we jump into Issue 3, and I'm going to try to save time for the public at the very end. However, we did get a request from Karen Bradbury from Senator Whitehouse's office.

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She had a comment earlier about the Goals and Objectives, and yes just in the interest of time I just want to go ahead and give her the opportunity to comment on that issue right now, before jumping to Issue 3.

MS. KERNS: Karen, we cannot hear you. I'm not sure if you're trying to make a comment. If you still are trying to make a comment, maybe you could send us a chat in the questions box. Then if you still are, maybe we'll come back to you after we finish with Issue 3, Chris, because I'm not hearing her.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, yes, I think that is the best approach, Toni, thanks. We'll just go move on to Issue 3. Matt and Dustin, please continue.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Just to clarify. There are a few other things that I think deserve the time to be addressed just yet, before I move on to Issue 3, namely should other approaches be developed for consideration, a trigger-based approach as Matt discussed before, using socioeconomic data, or are there any other approaches that the FMAT should look into further?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, thanks, forgot about those. Any input from the Board and Council on these approaches for the commercial/recreational allocation?

MS. KERNS: Chris, in the interest of time, maybe if there is anything that has been left out for Issue 2, Board or Council members could e-mail Matt or Dustin those additional items, and we could just move on to Issue 3.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, I think that is a great idea. This may come up again for e-mailing items, so Matt and Dustin, if any Board or Council members do that. What deadline would you like those comments?

MR. SEELEY: I believe, you know, as soon as possible would be appreciated, but.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Wednesday of next week, does that sound doable?

MR. SEELEY: You know by the end of the week would be great.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Okay. The official deadline, just in case it is a busy week for some people, we'll say Wednesday of next week will give us just a little bit of time.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I think that is more than fair, yes. On those last few items and anything else that comes up we run out of time on it. Provide those comments to Dustin and Matt by close of business on Wednesday, May 13th. Issue 3.

MR. SEELEY: I'll tackle this one here. I think things will move a little bit more quickly now, because some of these issues are related to things that we had already talked about. Focusing on the commercial allocations for the states, we would like some input again on the time series that should be considered. You know I have my notes here going about different time series we've already talked about.

I've heard that we like the ten years as a good base reference, a five-year time series is also very interesting, because of the recalibration through MRIP and new estimates, and then we also have some favor for the longer time period. We can apply all of that here, so we have all of those options already in place. If someone that made one of those comments would like to supplement that please do.

Again, any input on catch or landings states allocations, but similarly we've heard to do both approaches already. Again, the FMAT recommendation is to use a landings-based

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allocation, which is what is already set in place through Amendment 1, so we can continue that. Then again, noting that the commercial discards are considered to be negligible in the stock assessment. That is what we have for Issue 3, so thanks Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there any input from the Board and Council on commercial allocations that issue?

MS. KERNS: I do not see; oh, Jason McNamee has his hand raised.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Great, Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: I'll maybe just go briefly, so the shorter timeframe for the recreational piece I think, the discussion about the recalibration is, you know more important. That is still going to come into play with commercial size. But I still think there is relevant, a more recent period of time just given there has been a lot of commercial activity to the north in recent years as being driven by climate change. I prefer a more recent and shorter timeframe for the commercial allocation discussion as well.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Are there any other comments?

MS. KERNS: We have David Borden and Tony DiLernia.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, David Borden.

MR. COLSON LEANING: I can't hear anything. Is that specific to me?

MS. KERNS: David, you were muted by us, I think try again. Right now, you're muted by yourself, so try to unmute yourself and then see if you can talk, David.

MR. BORDEN: Okay. I agree with what Jason just offered, in terms of using a recent

timeframe because of the same logic, you know landings are shifting. But I would also point out that landings are going to shift regardless. They could go inshore or offshore; they could go north to south.

I think there would be merit in having another option in the document which would be based on a composite of two values. One would be the original landings period of '81 through '89. Use 50 percent of that value, and then use 50 percent of the value from the last ten years. The quick logic for using that would be that the stocks are moving in unpredictable manners.

The original baselines, using the original baseline, some component of it, kind of recognizes some of these disparate investments in infrastructure that are made. But also coupling it with the last ten years, would recognize the stock shift. I think there is some logic in also having that be one of the options with that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, a similar method that has been use at times, like in the South Atlantic Council, I think. Tony DiLernia.

MR. DiLERNIA: To be consistent with my previous remarks, I would suggest that we use the most recent ten years. It's been said before, I'll say it again. That's a theme that you said current for you, current for me, climate change, having management adapt to what is offshore of their states at that time. That is what we're supposed to be doing as fishery managers. I would stay with the most recent ten years.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there anyone else with input and comments on this issue?

MS. KERNS: You have Joe Cimino, followed by Steve Heins.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay Joe, you're up.

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MR. CIMINO: I just quickly wanted to plant some support for the option that David Borden just mentioned, at least for us to get a chance to see that since it has provided a good balance for some other species, and I'll leave it at that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Steve Heins.

MR. STEPHEN W. HEINS: I just don't see any utility in further development of catch-base and allocation, as far as commercial fishery goes, so I would recommend that be dropped.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there any more input on this issue?

MR. SEELEY: Mr. Chairman, this is Matt Seeley, if I may. I think that is a great point brought up by Mr. Heins about potentially dropping the catch-based approach here. If we can get anymore comment or input from any other Council and Board members on moving forward with potentially just one of the approaches, whether it's capture or landings that would be great.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, is there any objections from the Board and Council for removing the catch-based allocations for the commercial allocations, and I guess Toni if anyone raises their hands.

MS. KERNS: I do not see anyone raising their hand to object. Chris, Jason McNamee did have his hand up previously I think to make a comment.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, if there are no objections to that that gives the FMAT a little more focus on this, and one less set of calculations. Yes, I'll go back to Jay McNamee.

DR. McNAMEE: I was just raising my hand to support what Steve Heins said, so when we switched it up, I dropped my hand.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, good enough. Matt and Dustin, anything else we need for this issue?

MR. SEELEY: No, I think that was some great guidance, and I think we're ready to move on for the transfers. We're trying to move quickly here, so sorry everyone for going over.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Oh no, you're doing great. There is a lot here to cover, and I appreciate the Board and Council providing some pretty thorough input for the FMAT, so yes Issue 4.

MR. COLSON LEANING: We'll start with just the commercial state-to-state transfers. This one could be a simple thing to move forward on. Should this management tool be further developed, if so how, or do not adjust this provision, given that the majority of public comment has been in support of keeping this provision in the plan? Any comments on that would be appreciated.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there any input from the Board and Council on commercial state-to-state transfer?

MS. KERNS: You have Jason McNamee, David Borden, followed by Steve Heins.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: I don't have any issues. I guess my recommendation would be to further develop some potential better ways of managing this. Right now, it's just kind of a first come first served type of a system. When there was a lot of fish available it seemed to work out. You could find a state that hadn't been set up for a quota transfer.

My fear is that is not going to be the space for the foreseeable future. It just seems like not a

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growth system, where you're incentivized to go out panhandling early, just so you beat out the other states. I think there could be a better system put in place. I would love for there to be some other options.

The interstate transfer is a good thing, it gives us a lot of flexibility, a mechanism for initiating that transfer that is what I'm referring to. Further development on some options, I think would be really valuable. I would be happy to not do that right now, but I could send something into Matt and Dustin by way of some more detail on that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes thanks, I think that would be really helpful for them. Yes, it is a challenge for the different states when it comes to quota transfers. There is only so much quota available, and sometimes not enough. I think this year is definitely the case for that. Next up is David Borden.

MR. BORDEN: I agree with Jason's suggestions, but in a minimum, I would support if we don't do that, I would support maintaining then existing system, because it works. It has worked and states selectively make good use of it.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Steve Heins.

MR. HEINS: I agree completely with what was just said, especially let's find a way to better manage this. Having been the receiver of many, many transfers. I can tell you that this is a real challenge. I have always thought that if we had some sort of a neutral referee for this, maybe an ASMFC staff. I'm not going to go there, but whatever. Some kind of a way of better managing this that that quota could be better utilized among the states that request transfers.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Anymore input from the Board and Council on commercial state-to-state transfers?

MS. KERNS: You have Sonny Gwin.

MR. EARL "SONNY" GWIN: I am definitely for state-to-state transfers. I support it. We've transferred menhaden, Maryland has. We just recently did dogfish, I believe to Virginia, and I know we've done bluefish too. I firmly believe that we don't want to give up these fish, because it is an economic opportunity for commercial fishermen in our state. If we give up these fish and reallocate them, well that economic opportunity is gone. There is no fish to be had, and it doesn't give the commercial fisherman a chance to go out and work on something. Our state seems to be getting less and less every year, and we still need that economic opportunity. I'm definitely a supporter of state-to-state transfers.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Is there anymore comment on this? If not, is there any other input you're looking for, Matt and Dustin, for this issue.

MR. COLSON LEANING: It sounds like Jason will be following up with some ideas on how this could be revised. I would just encourage other members to either work with Jason, maybe David Borden, or to come up with additional ideas. If you don't have them at the moment, if you get those ideas in to Matt and I before Wednesday. It sounds like we'll be keeping this in, but potentially looking at a better system for how transfers are initiated and allocated to different states.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay great, I guess move on to the next portion of this if you're ready, unless there is someone else that had comment on the state-to-state transfers.

MS. KERNS: Chris, Maureen Davidson did have here hand up.

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CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes thanks, before we go to the sector transfer, I'll go to Maureen.

MS. MAUREEN DAVIDSON: I sort of just wanted to add that transfers are important. They do allow a resource to be used by those that are in the position to use it, and it does benefit the commercial fishermen. New York state, we would like to see it continue, if there can be a means to improve how we do it, so that it can be managed better, I would support that also. But I just really wanted to say on the record that the transfers are important for our commercial fishermen.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: All right, yes Dustin and Matt, go ahead and move on to the Sector Transfer part of Issue 4.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, the FMAT is looking for guidance on whether this should be developed further. Some potential modifications that the FMAT identified were should we look into potential policies on allowing or preventing transfers, maybe the Board and Council will have decisions there. Should the transfer cap be reanalyzed, and whether there should be considerations for a bidirectional transfer, should the FMAT develop something in that regards. Helpful advice is also if anything should just be left status quo.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, comments and input from the Board and Council for the sector transfers.

MS. KERNS: You have Tony DiLernia.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Tony.

MR. DiLERNIA: I would recommend that we consider now looking at bidirectional sector transfer. I think that is a tool that we may find to be useful, not just in the bluefish fishery, but also in other fisheries that have significant recreational and commercial components in

them. That should be applied. I would like to look at it now here, with a possibility for applying that process towards different fisheries in the future.

As far as the transfer cap of 10.5 million pounds are concerned. I was part of the Council when we came up with that number. I'm still very comfortable with that number, and again if there is going to be excess recreational quota in the water, I have no problems with transferring it to the commercial side, again must be excess recreational quota. I think a 10.5 million pounds cap is, I don't think we've ever used it, or we just most recently used it. Those are my two comments.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Anyone else with comments?

MS. KERNS: We have Nichola Meserve, and then followed by Roy Miller after Nichola.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Nichola.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: A follow up on Mr. DiLernia's comment about looking at bidirectional transfers. Then I also wanted to ask how the 10.5 million pounds was selected, and whether at that time or now consideration should be given to that being based on a percentage of the allowed harvest, as opposed to a set number, which makes it very different, depending on what the allowed harvest is for a sector in any given year.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt or Dustin, do you have any background on the basis for the 10.5-million-pound cap that was set in Amendment 1?

MR. SEELEY: I was going to say, due to Dustin's silence I'm thinking that we are probably both in the same boat here. I'm not sure where the 10.5 million exactly came from. I'm happy to take a look back at them and then we'll know in

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detail, and Nichola I can follow up with you on that.

MR. COLSON LEANING: I'm wondering also if Tony DiLernia might have some input there, since he indicates that he was part of that decision-making process.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Definitely, I think if you look at the landings probably when Amendment 1 was done, commercial bluefish landings were higher. I mean that is something where, I guess we want to come back to us. Tony DiLernia has something really quick to add, since he was involved.

MR. DiLERNIA: Mr. Chairman that at the time, it was basically a percentage. I think Nichola made a very good suggestion regarding the percentage of the total quota. I think we should go back to look and see. That 10.5 million, if I remember correctly, was a certain percentage of what was in effect at that time. Let's take a look at that percentage, and apply it towards future catches. I think Nichola made a very good suggestion.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks for that clarification, Tony. Next up is Roy Miller.

MR. ROY W. MILLER: I just wonder if we should be a bit cautious about allowing transfers to a stock that is experiencing overfishing and is currently overfished. There would be some conservation benefit when those conditions exist from not transferring. In other words, having less than allowable landings. I just throw that out there for consideration. It is something that I recall hearing in one of our public hearings as well.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other Board or Council members with input or comments on Sector Transfers?

MS. KERNS: I think that is everybody. We can move on to the next issue.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: On to Issue 5, the Rebuilding Plan.

MR. SEELEY: You all have seen the initial projections that we've put out there, and they haven't been completed yet. Once they are completed, they will be incorporated into the next FMAT Meeting Summary. That meeting is scheduled for a few weeks from now, so they will be available then.

But the FMAT is curious if outside of what we do have available here, are there any other projections that you're interested in exploring further? Then the other main point is what are we doing with the Rebuilding Plan? Again, the FMAT recommendation is to remove it. However, the staff highly recommends leaving it in due to a variety of reasons already explained.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, does the Board and Council have any input on the options for rebuilding, any alternative options? This may be an opportunity where after this meeting if any Board or Council members want to provide input to Matt and Dustin or maybe some other projections. But also, importantly the question of whether to address the Rebuilding Plan in this Amendment or a separate action. I'll open up to Council and Board members for input on those items.

MS. KERNS: Jason McNamee has his hand up.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: I'm wondering, we've got the projection scenarios here. I think it's a good set of projections. I'm wondering if there are any changes to how they're dealing with, like the recruitment assumption, any of those things in the projections? I'm not sure if that is a

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question for Dustin or Matt, or maybe even Dr. Wood. That is my question. I think these are all good. I wonder if they have any alternative assumptions for recruitment. My assumption is they're using sampling from the entire time series. I'm wondering if they could do like a shorter time series, and kind of use those on the projections as well. If I'm out of line, I'm not sure if this is the right place for that kind of discussion. You could tell me that too.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Dustin and Matt, do you have an answer to that or if that is something that Dr. Wood can quickly answer, as far as how that is handled in these projections.

DR. WOOD: Yes, I can answer that. This is Anthony Wood. We are sampling like you said, Jason, from the entire recruitment time series. I would have to rerun projections, but I can specify any time series to sample from.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Matt, did you have anything to add to that or does that pretty much cover the question that Jason asked?

MR. SEELEY: I think Dr. Wood is the best one to answer that question, so I think that was great.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other input on this issue from the Board and Council?

MR. COLSON LEANING: A quick interjection, sorry Chris, I can't raise my hand so I have to just interrupt sometimes. I'm wondering if Jason McNamee would be able to expand upon a suggestion, or maybe the best case would be him just emailing some ideas. But it sounds like Tony Wood can look at a variety of different recruitment averages over time, and maybe more direction would be helpful.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I don't know. Jason, if you have any thoughts on that right now, or would you just rather e-mail Dustin and Matt with your ideas after that or any other

additional questions? I'll leave that up to you right now.

DR. McNAMEE: You know I could sort of pick an arbitrary number. I guess maybe what I can, I don't know if this is appropriate. If there is no reason to do something like that. If recruitment doesn't seem to be different more recently than it was in the past, or anything like that. Then I don't see the need to make anyone do any extra work.

But if there are differences, I think it's worth an investigation of a shorter time period, like the last, and here I am making ad hoc, just throwing an ad hoc number out, but the last ten years or something like that. I'm happy to take that offline, but I don't want to do anything inappropriate, like to have them come forward with some projection scenario that the rest of the Board and Council didn't have a chance to weigh in on.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other comments or input on Issue 5?

MS. KERNS: Hannah Hart and Joe Cimino.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Hannah.

MS. HANNAH HART: I just kind of want to put this out there that given the status of the stock and the strict timeline that we're on. I would kind of side with the FMAT to recommend pulling the rebuilding plan out of the Amendment. I would also like to note that the majority of the comments are pushing for status quo in the first few issues. Given that with some of the disbelief in the MRIP estimates, you know maybe it's time to focus on the rebuilding plan, and kind of keep working on the other issues, but take our time looking through them.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Joe.

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MR. CIMINO: I've already said it once, but I strongly report removing the rebuilding plan and moving that forward first.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I have a question for Matt. If we didn't remove it today, and we came back in June after the FMAT, and after this meeting and saw the timeline for getting this all done within two years is probably not going to work. We would have the opportunity to separate out the rebuilding plan at our June meeting. Is that correct?

MR. SEELEY: Yes, thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. That is correct. You know as of now, as I've mentioned before, our timeline is set. We are working to meet that timeline. We can review this process as we continue along. It can be removed at a later date, put into a separate action, and still completed within the two-year timeline.

I personally think that as you're going through this that it may be a little bit too early to remove. However, it's up to the Council and Board for a decision. But I just want to again reemphasize that our timeline is very strict, and we are following along with it as it has been presented, so thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other thoughts on that point, as far as whether to continue to include the Rebuilding Plan in this Amendment, or remove it today. I've heard two comments about removing it today, but we have other options later on. This isn't the last opportunity to do this. Looking for a little more comment on which direction the FMAT should go for the Rebuilding Plan in this Amendment.

MS. KERNS: Chris, you have Nichola Meserve and then Emerson Hasbrouck.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Nichola.

MS. MESERVE: I would support the approach of keeping them together for now, let the FMAT leave this meeting with its new instructions, and come back to the Board and Council with their thoughts on whether they can continue to work on the same timeline for both things. There are some issues in the initial amendment, state-by-state commercial allocations that have been a longstanding issue that certain states have wanted to address. I wouldn't like to see those issues get bumped, unless it's necessary to meet the timeline for rebuilding separately.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Emerson.

MR. HASBROUCK: I would like to see them continue together for the time being, although what concerns me is that I heard several times today that we're under a real tight timeline for this process, which I think is probably based on initiating the Rebuilding Plan. I think that we're going to need more time for discussion about the allocation issues, but for now let's move both of these components together, and then separate them out this summer if we need to.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I guess we've heard our even support for both options. I guess is there any objection by the Council and Board to leave the Rebuilding Plan in the Amendment for now? We will definitely revisit this in June, and probably have a better idea, as far as whether the timing works, and you can take this up in June to decide whether it's best to take it out. Is there any objection to going with that option?

MS. KERNS: Chris, I'm not sure. I don't see any hands raised. Cheri Patterson did have her hand up earlier to comment, as an FYI.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I'll go to Cheri Patterson.

MS. CHERI PATTERSON: Yes, I was just going to indicate I would prefer to see them together a

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little while longer, but the minute you said that you were looking for opposition from that I took my hand down.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: All right thanks, Cheri. Yes, I guess we'll see where we are in June on this, and leave it in for now. Dustin and Matt, I guess you're ready to move on to Issue 6.

MR. COLSON LEANING: There are a few other issues that we want to examine. This one must be very simple. The FMAT recommends further development of Sector-Specific Management Uncertainty. We showed a draft flow chart of what that might look like. Basically, we're just looking for guidance, should this be considered further or should it be dropped out, and if there is like a drastic change that should be considered that isn't evident in the flow chart, what consideration would that be?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any comment from the Board and Council on how to address recreational and commercial management uncertainty?

MS. KERNS: We have Eric Reid, followed by Emerson Hasbrouck.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Eric.

MR. REID: I prefer to have them separate, just like what I'm looking at right here, I prefer that.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Emerson.

MR. HASBROUCK: I also prefer to see the uncertainty split, as is shown in the slide that we're looking at right now.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any objection to the approach up on the screen right now?

MS. KERNS: We have one Mid-Atlantic Council staff member that has his hand raised, Jose Montanez.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, Jose.

MS. KERNS: But he is not connected via audio, so that actually won't work.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, if there are no objections to this, I guess Matt and Dustin do you have the direction you need for this item under Issue 6?

MR. COLSON LEANING: For this one we're asking if for-hire sector separation should be considered further, and on top of that should both a sub-ACL option as well as a potential policy, while not a specific allocation, maybe a policy for different measures be considered.

MR. SEELEY: Dustin, if I may just add on to that again. Just to emphasize the fact that these policy changes and things that we're kind of referencing. Depending on the degree of what sort of change, a lot of these management measures that we are allowed to put into place can address this different management option.

You know we have different bag limits that can be imposed, and there are different measures that are in place for the for-hire as opposed to the private angler. That is something that can be continued to be revised over time, as we get more information from the stock assessment updates and things like that. Just please keep that in mind if you think about this action moving forward.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks for that clarification, Matt. Basically, through specifications we can have different regulations for the private anglers and the for-hire anglers like we're doing now, without having to go through the Amendment. But if we wanted to have actual sector allocations for the for-hire sector that would have to go through this Amendment, am I understanding that correctly?

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MR. SEELEY: Yes, that is exactly right.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any input from the Board and Council on Sector Separation?

MS. KERNS: You have Adam then Jason then Emerson then Tony, then Doug Haymans.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay long list. I'll probably have to ask again after Adam, but we're able to start with Adam Nowalsky.

MR. NOWALSKY: I'm going to speak against continued development of separate allocations. That recommendation is based on a number of factors. Number one is the high degree of MRIP uncertainty that we currently have that has led us to this rebuilding time. We're basing something on a very recent change, and to go ahead and make what would be another significant change I think would be very concerning. Secondly, based on the very low percentage numbers we see to that allocation could be considered right now; I would be very concerned about the implications that that could have on the operation of the for-hire sector with numbers that would potentially be so extremely low. Third, I think we have something in place that we're working on with regards to separate measures.

I would encourage some additional guidance from the FMAT in this process on ideas on how we could further codify what we're already doing through specification. If there is any management recommendation that comes out of that either through the amendment process, or a recommendation for a different management document venue such as a framework or addendum. I think that would be worthwhile for the FMAT to consider as they move forward with this work.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Toni, who do we have next on the list?

MS. KERNS: I think the order I gave you was Jason, Emerson, Tony DiLernia, and then Doug Haymans.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Jason.

DR. McNAMEE: This would be counter to what Mr. Nowalsky just offered. I fully support continuing to develop, so pursue this further. I think there were some good options in there. You know I think most folk are most concerned about setting a quota-like allocation for this sector, but it doesn't have to be that way.

In a sub-ACL one of the ways it would characterize in the document, and I think that's a good approach, so I fully support continuing to develop some of these for-hire sector separation options. I think it's imperative for this industry that we start looking at them differently than we look at the general recreational fishery for a lot of different reasons. I would like to see this pursued further.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Next up is Emerson.

MR. HASBROUCK: I would suggest that we keep the for-hire sector separation included in this. Let's see what actions get developed, and then let's see what the public has to say about it. Let's keep it in.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Tony.

MR. DiLERNIA: I agree with everything Adam said on this issue when he was first to speak. I agree with everything he said. At the same time, I think it will be useful to keep this in, because at least in New York I keep hearing, and I'm sure in other states. They look at, we want sector separation, we want sector separation.

Much of that is driven by what they saw occur in the Gulf of Mexico in the sector separation process there. I think once they see what they



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would actually get in the sector separation scenario, they may change their tune. But the only way we're going to do that is if we jump through the hoops that are necessary to come up with the numbers. While I agree with everything Adam said, I would still keep it there until you get the final product, to let those that have been asking for sector separation, to see what they actually get. You know to quote the old proverb, be careful what you're asking for, you may just get it. I think that would apply to this case.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Doug Haymans.

MR. DOUG HAYMANS: I had taken my hand down, because I agree with everything that Adam said, but seeing as how Tony just did, but went the opposite way. I would agree with Adam to remove it from this action. I leave it there.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Are there any other comments on how to handle the for-hire sector separation? Definitely have different opinions on this one.

MR. FOTE: I had my hand raised, Tom Fote.

MS. KERNS: Yes, I'm getting back to you. The order that I have here is Tom then Justin then Joe, and then Emerson has his hand back up again. I don't know if that is on purpose or a carryover.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: We'll deal with Tom, Justin, and Joe for now, so start off with Tom Fote.

MR. FOTE: I understand where Adam is coming from, but I agree with Tony. To be transparent, and there was a lot of discussion in New Jersey about fair and equitable, how this basically came about. I think we should go through and show exactly what the allowance would be.

I think we need to do all the data to basically be transparent to the recreational, because I caught a lot of flak on this, and it did not go to public hearings. It was done by the Council, mostly surprising all of us about the suggestion when it came in. I think we need to go out with everything, I think that is why I agree with Tony and what Tony DiLernia said.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Justin.

DR. DAVIS: I'll be brief. I just want to speak in favor of keeping this in for now, and working on it further. I agree with what Emerson and Tom and Tony said is that there is definitely a lot of interest in this from the for-hire sector. I think given that we should keep it in, develop it a little further.

It sounds like a simple concept, but when you start really thinking about it and how to actually implement it, it could be incredibly tricky to do. I think it really just would be in our best interest to flesh this out a little bit, and then put those different types of options and approaches out there in front of the for-hire sector and the public at large, and get further feedback. I'm in favor of keeping it in.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Joe Cimino.

MR. CIMINO: Just ditto what Tony said. I share Adam's concerns, but I think it needs to stay in for now.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I guess is there any objection to keeping it in for now, not that we're looking whether we support Sector Separation, but to at least include it among the issues based on the comments we received.

MS. KERNS: I see Justin Davis and Emerson have their hands up from before. I don't know if that was on purpose, and then Adam did raise his hand to object.

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CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Adam, I'll let you go ahead and speak on this again. I'll let you go speak on this again.

MR. NOWALSKY: I'm not going to attempt to force a motion on this at this point. There are certainly merits of leaving it in from a transparency perspective, from helping complete the administrative record and consideration of this topic. I think what I would ask for would be some directive that if there is a need to focus on one aspect of this or another that priority be given towards consideration of fine tuning what we're doing now, with regards to different measures by mode, and that be a priority that comes out of this.

However, allow some continued development again to address, I acknowledge that there are members of the public that are interested in this. My concerns remain, if I had to make a final vote on this today, I would be opposed to it, sounds like I would not be alone in that position. But I don't want to push this to any motion today. I just think there is some merit in some further looking at it, but I wouldn't want it to cause pushback on anything else, or loss of some more effort on fine tuning what we're doing on our specifications process.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Dustin and Matt, did you get the input that you need for Sector Separation, or do you need a little more guidance from the Board and Council at this point?

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, so it sounds like we'll be developing this further with the FMAT. Possibly a little bit more guidance on should all different types of allocations be considered, or should one specific type of allocation be considered? The options that the FMAT and staff have put together is there is of course the landings-based allocation, and MRIP is A plus B1.

There is the catch-based allocation, which is A plus B1 plus B2, B2 being all live releases. That is possibly the biggest look at an allocation, and the alternative to that is A plus B1, and then B2 is times the 15 percent mortality ratio, so that is landings plus dead discards. The FMAT can look at all these three different types of allocation. It might thoroughly complicate the issue, or if the Board and Council have any guidance today, we could pursue one or two of these different options.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I think the list of things for the FMAT is already getting pretty long. I guess is there any thoughts from the Council and Board on winnowing down these options for how to look at allocations, or is the Board and Council comfortable with the FMAT analyzing all of them.

MS. KERNS: Mr. Chairman, Emerson Hasbrouck has his hand up. If there are not some specifics, maybe folks could e-mail, again Dustin and Matt the specific ways they would like them to review, and maybe that would help eliminate some. But Emerson just took his hand down, so I'm not sure maybe he didn't need to talk.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Based on Toni's suggestion there, I guess also in the interest of time. You know if there is any input that the Board and Council want to provide Dustin and Matt on how to look at this. Unless there are any specific thoughts on that right now, if not I'll ask Dustin and Matt to move on to any other issues under Issue 6 that they need to put on this.

MS. KERNS: I don't see any hands raised.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: All right thanks. Anything else for Issue 6?

MS. KERNS: Doug Haymans has his hand up.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Doug.

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MR. HAYMANS: Mr. Chairman, I sincerely am saddened that we've got until 1:10 for me to get to the one issue I was really interested in. But in the interest of time, Georgia is very interested in having this plan consider adding a recreational component to de minimis. I'm prepared with a motion if you would like that if needed. Otherwise, I would like for us to consider adding recreational de minimis into the bluefish.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I guess a quick question I have, for I guess from ASMFC and Council staff is this is a joint plan. If we decided to include an option for recreational de minimis status, how would that work since de minimis is really just on the ASMFC side of this FMP?

MR. COLSON LEANING: This is Dustin speaking. I did a little bit of checking around with GARFO staff and Council staff. As you eluded to, in the federal plan de minimis has not really been incorporated. It's been put forward before in a couple other plans. Actually, it was brought up in Amendment 1 for bluefish. It does complicate the issue, but I don't think there is any rule specifically prohibiting the use of de minimis in a federal plan, and I'll let others weigh in on that if they want to elaborate.

MR. SEELEY: Yes, this is Matt. I think I can add a little bit there. I do believe that it's okay and it can be added in. I think that it can be actually a Commission only alternative as well. If that is not right, correct guidance please someone chime in there. But I do believe that is correct.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Any other input or clarification on how de minimis would work, and if not, I'll look for any thoughts from the Board and Council on including this issue in the Amendment.

MS. KERNS: I think Doug has a follow up, and then we have Hannah Hart on deck.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: That is part of why I would like to have it in, so I can get a complete and thorough explanation of whether or not it is allowed through the Council process or not. Yes.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Hannah.

MS. HART: Mine is more of a question than related to this. Do you want me to hold off for now?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, we'll go ahead and just handle the question of de minimis for now, and we can come back to you after that if that is okay.

MS. HART: Okay yes that is perfect, thank you.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I guess just to speed things up. Is there any objection from the Council and Board on the FMAT exploring the possibility of recreational de minimis in this amendment?

MS. KERNS: I do not see any hands raised.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: All right, great. I guess that will be something for the FMAT to consider. Before I go back to Dustin and Matt, I'll go back to Hannah, she had a question on something else.

MS. HART: I'm curious, has the Council Board ever discussed maybe handing management over to ASMFC? I know the South Atlantic Council did this with cobia, and I'm just curious if we were to discuss that or anything would that allow more flexibility with management, and what that might look like, or if that is even something of interest from this body.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I don't ever recall the question coming up for bluefish, but I'll open up

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for either Council staff or GARFO or whoever, if they have an answer for Hannah on that.

MS, KERNS: You don't have any GARFO hands up, but Tony DiLernia does have his hand up.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Tony.

MR. DiLERNIA: This request actually came to the Council in the mid '90s during the Clinton administration, when there was a desire to reduce the number of federal regulations on the books. There was a request at that time for the Council to consider Council withdrawing management of the bluefish, and turning it all over to ASMFC. Because at that time a lot of it was still occurring in federal waters, the Council decided against that. It has been discussed, but again it was the mid-nineties, I would say maybe '96, '97. The Council at that time decided to maintain and keep the management of bluefish. That is the last time I heard it was ever discussed.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Okay, Dustin and Matt, anything else for the Other Issues? I can't remember if there are any others, or did we cover all the ones that FMAT wanted input on?

MR. SEELEY: I do believe we've covered everything. I just would request that you know in the essence of time. If any Commissioners or Council members do have input on how they would like to see the for-hire sector separation allocations based on either landings or catch. If they do, please reach out to us it's an important topic that will help guide development. But I think that is it from my end, Dustin, if there is anything else to add.

MR. COLSON LEANING: Yes, I'll say this is what the FMAT and staff prepared based on public feedback. You know it certainly doesn't preclude any other items being added on to this Amendment, but as we can see it's already quite a robust Amendment. But if there are

additional considerations that are very important for a Board or Council member to include, we encourage you to e-mail us within the next week.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Just really quick, is there any items that we haven't discussed today that any Board and Council members right now would like the FMAT to consider?

MS. KERNS: I don't see any hands up from Commissioners. I will tell you that we did have a couple of public comment requests throughout, going through the issues.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: I know we still have Other Business, but I know the public has been waiting very patiently on that. I'll open it up for public comment, you're going to have to keep it pretty brief, 60 seconds for comments. Toni, is there any public that are still interested in providing some comments?

MS. KERNS: I would ask the public that had previously reached out to use the raise your hand function to comment. Your hand will be raised when the red arrow is pointing down, and Gregg DiDomenico has his hand up. I will unmute him.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Gregg, go ahead.

MR. GREGG DiDOMENICO: One quick question. If a catch-based approach is going to remain in this Amendment or Addendum, if it finds its way to be implemented in bluefish. Is catch-based management going to be considered in black sea bass, scup, and fluke?

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: We'll talk about that this afternoon, or later this afternoon. Is there any other public with comments?

MS. KERNS: I don't see anybody else who is raising their hands.

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CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: If there is no other public comment, I'll then bring it back to the Board and Council to see if there is any other business that needs to be discussed today.

MS. KERNS: Okay, I'm sorry. I did just get a text from the folks who are managing the question box, and they are saying that previously Chris Ledford had asked to speak, so I'm going to unmute Chris.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, Chris go ahead.

MR. CHRIS LEDFORD: (Feedback)

DR. DREW: I believe we were getting some feedback on Chris's line. I've muted him now. It sounds like he was on another call, so maybe we can come back to him.

MS. KERNS: All right, the other person Chris was Jason Jarvis. Let me just get down to, I am not seeing him on the webinar anymore, Katie. Do you see him?

DR. DREW: No.

MS. KERNS: Okay, so the only other person was Mr. Ledford.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, and I apologize to the public for having to wait, but you saw and heard today that we had a lot to cover, in order for the FMAT to move forward on this. Anyways, so yes, I'll just bring it back, unless the public chimes in here in the next few seconds. I'll bring it back to the Board and Council, to see if there is any Other Business, they have for the Bluefish Board today.

MS. KERNS: I don't see any.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Hearing none, I see Matt and Dustin have the next step slide up, as far as the timeline goes. I don't know if you

wanted to add, Matt or Dustin if you want to add anything to this before we adjourn.

MR. SEELEY: I just wanted to put this out, just for people to reference one last time, and I just want to say thank you very, very much to everyone on the call, Council and Commission members especially. This is extremely productive. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we're looking forward to going through it. Thank you everyone so much for all of your input.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, thank you to you Matt and Dustin for walking us through all of this, and I thank the Board and Council for all the input that you provided them today, so the FMAT can move forward and to see the timeline is pretty tight, and we'll be pretty busy when it comes to bluefish, and talking about this a lot.

But look forward to the progress that they make on that. Of course, many thanks to ASMFC staff for keeping the webinar moving along smoothly, and keeping me from going off the rails. Sorry it took so long, but I think we got a lot of good work done today. Unless there are any objections, I will go ahead and adjourn the meeting. Thanks everyone!

MS. KERNS: Chris Batsavage, Chris Ledford does have his hand up now. I don't know if you want to take his comment or not. I know he was patiently waiting.

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Yes, sure Chris, go ahead.

MR. CHRIS LEDFORD: Thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate that time. I just wanted to weigh in on a couple things, just the for-hire sector separating that out, the challenges that that can create. It can potentially be a loophole, you know for people to take advantage of a different limit, especially when people are holding a commercial license and a for-hire.

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The Board will review the minutes during its next meeting.

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Mid-Atlantic Marine Fisheries Council Meeting Webinar  
May 2020

You know I'm not getting into the philosophy of that. I'm just saying as long as the reporting is correct. It's created loopholes in the past, especially, well I won't get into that. But it's just something we've got to watch, as well as the problem it creates amongst the user group there. My only other issue was that well actually, just voting for a status quo on a lot of this Bluefish Amendment, if you will.

I'm sorry my verbiage may not be 100 percent correct. I'm outside so there might be a little wind. I hope you can still hear me. But the other issue is, a lot of the quota transfers have helped commercial fishermen, and I get that. But I hate to see it at the expense of other commercial fishermen. I appreciate the opportunity to speak, just want to monitor this. Again, I want to try to keep people fishing in the commercial sector, and I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

**ADJOURNMENT**

CHAIRMAN BATSAVAGE: Thanks, Chris. As you see we'll be meeting about this issue quite a bit this summer. Definitely, I hope you continue to listen in and participate, and stay tuned, thanks.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 1:30  
p.m. on May 6, 2020)

To the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission,

My name is Dean Pesante, owner/operator of the F/V Oceana Inshore Gillnet Vessel based out of Point Judith, Rhode Island. I have been working as a commercial fisherman since 1984 and have captained my own vessel since 1991. On behalf of myself, other commercial fishermen, and shoreside dealerships and businesses throughout the state of Rhode Island, I am writing to you today to express my concern and request action be taken on issues pertaining to recent changes in Bluefish management. Specifically, I am referring to 1) quota distribution between commercial and recreational sectors and 2) commercial quota distributions between the Atlantic states. I am expressing my concerns because the new drastic cuts in quota for the commercial sector would create tremendous hardships for people in the Bluefish industry.

### **Adjustment of Recreational and Commercial Quota**

Currently, Bluefish are in greater demand in the marketplace than they ever have been. More people are buying Bluefish every year, and they have become an extremely desirable fish to eat. The increasing demand for Bluefish has made the fishery more valuable and important to commercial fishermen and related businesses. Consequently, more commercial fishermen and related businesses have come to rely on this fishery and need an appropriate amount of quota to sustain their businesses.

Recent management measures have cut the commercial quota by more than 50%. These measures will create enormous financial and economic hardships for the commercial fishing industry. In keeping true to its mission of providing food to consumers, the commercial fishing industry is considered an essential business, and the reduction in quota will prevent the industry from operating sufficiently. It is important to understand that cutting the commercial Bluefish quota in half will have detrimental social and economic impacts as well as severely and directly hurt the livelihoods of Bluefish fishermen and associated businesses. In creating policies, please consider how you would feel if your income were cut in half.

The commercial fishery is managed with empirical data reported in a responsible manner under Federal and State Laws by both fishermen and dealers. ALL commercial fishermen provide accurate and realistic information to Federal and State entities. In contrast, recreational fishermen are not required by any law to report data nor any information. They only provide information voluntarily, and the data received from recreational fishermen is marginal at best. Because they are not regulated by Federal or State Laws, recreational fishermen that voluntarily report information have the ability to inflate data and exaggerate landings.

It is difficult to understand how such severe quota reductions to the commercial Bluefish industry were made with consideration to incredibly uncertain data from the recreational sector.

For these reasons, we feel the Bluefish quota needs to be reallocated with a much higher percentage given back to the commercial industry.

### **Adjustment of Commercial Bluefish Quota between Atlantic States**

The second issue I would like to discuss is the commercial Bluefish quota distribution between the Atlantic states. Evidence suggests the trend of both Bluefish populations and associated landings by commercial fishermen have changed immensely in recent years on the Atlantic coast. While the population of Bluefish and consequent landings have together increased significantly in northern Atlantic waters, the population and landings have decreased significantly in southern Atlantic waters. These changes are most likely due to climate change and water temperatures.

Southern states that currently have a larger percentage of Bluefish quota have consistently reported landings significantly below their allocation. The opposite is true in Northern states (New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts), who have consistently landed an amount of fish that exceeded their quotas. Consequently, northern States have had to request quota be transferred from the Southern states.

I believe an adjustment of quota allocation between the States should be made to accommodate the current state of the Bluefish population and landings. A more accurate and appropriate allocation of Bluefish quota is necessary.

Reductions in quota in the commercial Bluefish industry will have dire consequences for fishermen and related businesses. In this letter, I have proposed the following two solutions to resolve the current problems: 1) Reallocate quota from the recreational sector to the commercial sector and 2) Modify the percentage of commercial quota between Atlantic States to better represent the current trends in Bluefish populations and landings. Please consider these solutions and take prompt action.

Respectfully,

Dean Pesante

F/V Oceana

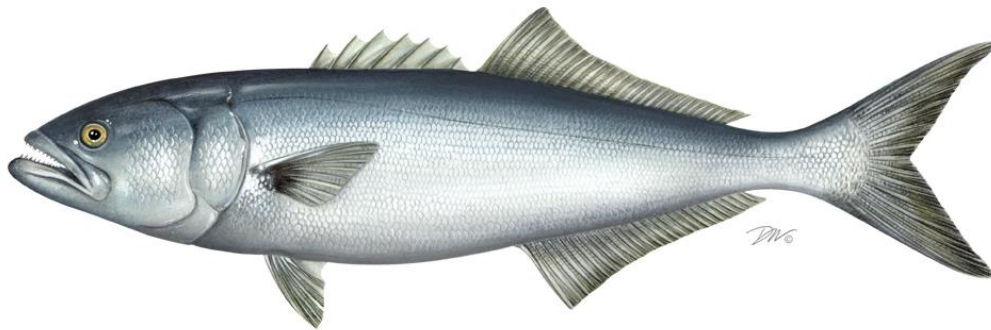


**ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**

**REVIEW OF THE INTERSTATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**FOR BLUEFISH**  
***(Pomatomus saltatrix)***

**2019 FISHING YEAR**



Prepared by the Plan Review Team



*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

## Executive Summary

Bluefish from Maine through Florida are jointly managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission under Amendment 1 and Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (ISFMP).

Based on the 2019 operational stock assessment and peer review conducted by the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop, bluefish are overfished, but are not experiencing overfishing relative to the updated biological reference points. The updated stock assessment incorporated data through 2018 and included calibrated estimates of recreational catch and effort from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

2019 recreational bluefish harvest was estimated at 12.1 million fish weighing 15.6 million pounds (Tables 2 and 3). Recreational dead discards were estimated at 4.0 million fish. 2019 recreational landings cannot be compared against the recreational harvest limit (RHL), because the RHL was set using uncalibrated MRIP estimates and the landings estimate uses calibrated MRIP estimates. 2019 commercial bluefish landings were recorded at approximately 3.0 million pounds, which falls below the quota of 7.7 million pounds (Table 1). Total removals of 16.1 million fish in 2019 remains near the time series low of 13.3 million fish reached in 2018 (Figure 2).

In 2019, all states implemented management programs consistent with the intent of Amendment 1 and Addendum I to the ISFMP. Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia requested *de minimis* status for 2020. Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia all qualify for *de minimis* status because their commercial landings in 2019 were less than 0.1% of the coastwide commercial landings estimate.

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## **2019 REVIEW OF THE ASMFC FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BLUEFISH (*Pomatomus saltatrix*)**

### **I. Status of the Fishery Management Plan**

<u>Date of FMP Approval:</u>	1989
<u>Amendments:</u>	Amendment 1 (1998); Addendum I (2012)
<u>Management Unit:</u>	Migratory stocks of bluefish in U.S. state and federal waters of the western North Atlantic
<u>States with Declared Interest:</u>	Maine through Florida, excluding Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia
<u>Active Committees:</u>	ASMFC: Bluefish Management Board, Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, Plan Review Team, and Stock Assessment Subcommittee MAFMC: Bluefish Committee, Monitoring Committee, Advisory Panel, and Scientific and Statistical Committee

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for bluefish was adopted by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) in October 1989. It was the first FMP developed jointly by an interstate commission and a federal fishery management council.

Bluefish is currently managed under Amendment 1 to the FMP approved in October 1998 and implemented in 2000. The goal of the Amendment is to conserve the bluefish resource along the Atlantic coast, specifically to:

1. Increase understanding of the stock and fishery
2. Provide 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. Promote compatible management regulations between State and Federal jurisdictions
5. Prevent recruitment overfishing
6. Reduce the waste in both the commercial and recreational fisheries.

States and jurisdictions with a declared interest in the bluefish FMP include all ASMFC member states and jurisdictions, with the exception of Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. Management issues are addressed jointly through the ASMFC Bluefish Management Board (Board) and the MAFMC (Council). The MAFMC's Bluefish Technical Monitoring Committee (MC) conducts annual plan monitoring, which is reviewed jointly by the Council's and Board's

Bluefish Advisory Panels (AP), and all committee recommendations are then provided to the Board and Council for review. A working group comprised of members from the Commission's Bluefish Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS), the Commission's Bluefish Technical Committee (TC), and the MC addresses stock assessment matters. The Board may implement changes to the FMP in state waters through the adaptive management process. The TC, Plan Review Team (PRT), Plan Development Team (PDT), and AP provide technical and industry advice to the Board throughout the adaptive management process.

In February 2012, the Board approved Addendum I to Amendment 1 to the Bluefish FMP. The Addendum establishes a coastwide biological monitoring program to improve the quantity and quality of information available for use in bluefish stock assessments. A summary of these findings from the most recent year are found in Section V.

### Annual Fishery Specifications

Commercial and recreational bluefish harvests are managed via sector-specific landings limits (i.e., a coastwide commercial fishery quota and a recreational harvest limit, or RHL). The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Bluefish MC annually review the best available information and make fishery specification recommendations to the Council and Board for the subsequent fishing year. Recommendations include commercial quota, RHL, research set-aside (RSA), and other management measures such as minimum size limits and bag limits. The Council and Board meet jointly (typically in August) to consider the SSC's and MC's fishery specification recommendations and formalize commercial and recreational catch limits, and other management measures.

Annual fishery specification recommendations are typically developed as follows: final commercial quota and RHL recommendations are derived from an annual catch limit (ACL), which the FMP defines as equal to the allowable biological catch (ABC), and is in turn equal to or less than an overfishing limit (OFL). The stock's OFL is a catch level that corresponds to the stock's maximum sustainable yield, which is determined through the most recent stock assessment. After accounting for management uncertainty, 17% of the ACL is allocated to the commercial sector and 83% to the recreational sector; these are the commercial and recreational annual catch targets (ACTs). Discard estimates are deducted from ACTs to derive commercial and recreational total allowable landings (TALs). If the recreational fishery is not projected to land its TAL (by comparison of the recreational landings estimate from the previous year), then at the discretion of the Board and Council, quota may be transferred from the recreational to the commercial sector, not to exceed a commercial quota of 10.5 million pounds (the average commercial landings during the period 1990-1997). The final commercial quota is then allocated to the states of Maine through Florida based on average commercial landings during 1981-1989. The state-specific shares are detailed in Table 1.

## II. Status of the Stock

The 2019 operational assessment for bluefish was peer reviewed at the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop and was approved by the Board and Council for management use.

The biological reference points from SARC 41 were based on maximum sustainable yield (MSY). MSY reference points require a reliable stock-recruitment relationship and the 2015 SAW determined that this relationship is poorly defined for bluefish. Therefore, for SAW 60, spawning potential ratio (SPR) reference points were used as a proxy for MSY reference points.  $F_{40\%SPR}$  was selected at SAW 60 as the  $F_{MSY}$  proxy for the overfishing threshold. This threshold was modified by the SSC to  $F_{35\%SPR}$ , noting that  $F_{40\%SPR}$  might be inappropriate for bluefish, a highly productive species. The biomass target ( $SSB_{MSY}$  proxy) was established by projecting the population forward until an equilibrium spawning stock biomass was reached (NEFSC 2015). The  $F_{35\%SPR}$  and corresponding  $SSB_{35\%SPR}$  proxy biological reference points for bluefish were updated for this 2019 operational assessment

The results of the 2019 operational assessment indicate that bluefish are overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2018 was estimated at 91,041 metric tons which is below the SSB threshold of 99,359 metric tons. The bluefish stock has experienced a decline in SSB over the past decade, coinciding with an increasing trend in fishing mortality (F). Recruitment (age-0 fish) has remained fairly steady, fluctuating just below the time series mean of 46 million fish. As a result of very low catch in 2018, F was estimated to be 0.146 which is below the F threshold ( $F_{35\%SPR}=0.183$ ) for the first time in the time-series.

## III. Status of the Fishery

From 2010-2019, recreational catch (harvest plus fish caught and released) of bluefish in U.S. waters of the Atlantic coast averaged 47.6 million fish annually (Table 2). In 2019, recreational catch was estimated at 38.6 million fish which is a 25% increase relative to 2018. In 2019, recreational anglers harvested an estimated 12.1 million fish weighing 15.6 million pounds (7,056 metric tons). Both 2018 and 2019 represent years of low harvest relative to the time series average in both pounds and numbers of fish. Additionally the average weight of landed fish for both years is approximately 1.3 pounds, which is significantly lower than the time series average of 2.6 pounds. This is likely due to reduced availability of mature fish, a direct result from the stock's overfished status. The majority of the recreational harvest (pounds) came from New York (23%), North Carolina (19%), Florida (18%) and New Jersey (11%) (Table 3). In 2019, recreational dead discards (15% of B2) were estimated at 4.0 million fish (Table 2).

From 1985-1999, annual commercial landings of bluefish in U.S. waters of the Atlantic coast averaged 11.3 million pounds (5,129 metric tons). After the implementation of the Amendment 1 quota system, from 2000-2019 commercial landings of bluefish have averaged 5.9 million pounds (2,698 metric tons) annually (Figure 2). In 2019, commercial landings were estimated at 3.0 million pounds (1,357 metric tons), an increase of 23% relative to 2018 landings and a 61% underage of the 2019 commercial quota (7.7 million pounds). The majority of commercial

landings came from North Carolina (37%), New York (20%), and Rhode Island (14%). Commercial dead discards are considered negligible.

#### **IV. Status of Research and Monitoring**

Many states, Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP), and the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) conduct fishery-independent surveys. New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina (SEAMAP) provide indices of juvenile bluefish abundance for stock assessment, and Connecticut, New Jersey, Virginia (NEAMAP), and North Carolina provide indices of adult abundance. Year class strength is monitored through a number of fishery-independent surveys (NEFSC 2015). Although not included in the 2019 operational assessment, Massachusetts, Delaware, Georgia and Florida also maintain indices of abundance from surveys that encounter bluefish. Refer to Table 4 for status of monitoring efforts by state in 2019.

Commercial landings information is collected by most states from dealer or fisherman reporting programs, which is provided to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program's (ACCSP) Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). Fishermen fishing in federal waters are required to report their landings to NOAA Fisheries. Recreational catch and harvest is monitored by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP).

Addendum I to Amendment 1 (2012) implemented a biological monitoring program to enhance age and length data used in bluefish stock assessments. Under Addendum I, states that accounted for more than 5% of total coastwide bluefish harvest (recreational and commercial combined) for the 1998-2008 period are required to collect a minimum of 100 bluefish ages (50 from January through June, 50 from July through December). Those states are Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina. Age samples are primarily collected from fishery-dependent sources (e.g., party/charter boats, fishing tournaments and volunteer anglers), although samples collected from fishery-independent sources are sometimes utilized as needed to fulfill this requirement. In 2019, most of these states were able to collect the minimum of 100 age samples (Table 4), and all states made a good effort to collect 50 age samples from both spring and fall. Massachusetts collected just 96 samples, just under the 100 sample requirement. South Carolina also reported -- age samples collected by personnel of the SEAMAP-SA Coastal Trawl Survey, and from the South Carolina Inshore Finfish Monitoring program.

As prescribed in the addendum, following the end of the first year of the sampling program, the TC reviewed the sampling design and evaluated the optimal geographic range and sample size for bluefish age data. The TC found the sampling program design to be satisfactory. However, additional TC reviews may be warranted as the program continues, especially in light of the difficulties expressed by some states to collect samples before July.

## **V. Status of Management Measures and Issues**

The Board and Council recommend adjustments to the commercial quota and RHL annually using the specification setting process detailed in Amendment 1 (Section 3.1.1.6) and in Section I of this report. The recreational fishery is allocated 83% of the ACL, and 17% is allocated to the commercial fishery. The coastwide commercial quota is allocated to the states via state-specific percentage shares based on landings from 1981-1989 (Table 1).

The 2019 ACL was 21.8 million pounds (9,895 metric tons); after a transfer of 4.0 million pounds from the recreational to commercial sector, the commercial quota was 7.7 million pounds (3,497 metric tons) and the RHL was 11.6 million pounds (5,271 metric tons). 2019 commercial bluefish landings were recorded at approximately 3.0 million pounds, which falls below the quota. 2019 recreational landings cannot be compared against the RHL, because the RHL was set using uncalibrated MRIP estimates and the landings estimate uses the calibrated MRIP estimates. Therefore, no federal accountability measures have been triggered for 2020. 2019 state-specific shares and landings, and initial 2020 state-specific shares are listed in Table 1.

The MAFMC and ASMFC are continuing to work on the development of a rebuilding plan as part of the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment, which will involve a comprehensive review of the Bluefish FMP's sector-based allocations, commercial allocations to the states, transfer processes, as well as the FMP goals and objectives.

## **VI. State-by-State Implementation of 2019 FMP Compliance Requirements**

These states and jurisdictions are required to comply with the provisions of the Bluefish FMP: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The following are specific FMP compliance requirements for 2019:

- Each state must restrict the possession of bluefish by recreational anglers to no more than fifteen fish per day, or have an ASMFC-approved equivalent conservation program.
- Each state must restrict its commercial fishery to the quota adopted under procedures specified in the FMP.
- These states are required to collect a minimum of 100 age samples per Addendum I to Amendment 1: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and North Carolina.
- States must submit annual compliance reports verifying that the above listed FMP requirements have been implemented. Compliance reports should also include an overview of permitting requirements for commercial and party/charter vessels and commercial dealers.



Based on the annual state compliance reports, the PRT determined all states and jurisdictions implemented a management program in 2019 consistent with the intent of the ISFMP for Bluefish (Amendment 1 and Addendum I). All states implemented a recreational possession limit not exceeding 15 fish per person and were able to collect all or nearly all of the 100 required biological samples. Refer to Table 4 for state monitoring and reporting requirements, Table 5 for fishery regulations by state in 2019, and Table 1 for commercial quota monitoring and harvest.

Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia requested *de minimis* status for 2020. Maine, South Carolina, and Georgia qualify for *de minimis* status because their commercial landings from the most recent year were less than 0.1% of the coastwide commercial landings estimate (Table 1).

### **Developing Issues:**

When developing the 2020 specifications in 2019, the MC's analysis indicated that landings were projected to exceed the RHL. As such, the Board and Council approved recreational fishery measures that would prevent a landings limit overage. The measures include a coastwide bag limit of 3-fish for private anglers and shore-based anglers, and a 5-fish limit for for-hire anglers. The one exception is Georgia, which has a bag limit of 15 fish, a minimum size of 12 inches, and a seasonal closure which begins March 1 and ends on April 30, 2020. Georgia's measures were approved by the Board through the Commission's Conservation Equivalency Policy.

## **VII. Prioritized Research Needs**

The following research recommendations were identified at the 60<sup>th</sup> SAW/SARC:

### *High Priority*

1. Determine whether NC scale data from 1985-1995 are available for age determination; if available, re-age based on protocols outlined in ASMFC (2001); if re-aging results in changes to age assignments, quantify the effects of scale data on the assessment.
2. Develop additional adult bluefish indices of abundance (e.g., broad spatial scale longline survey or gillnet survey).
3. Expand age structure of SEAMAP index.

### *Moderate Priority*

4. Investigate species associations with recreational angler trips targeting bluefish (on a regional and seasonal basis) to potentially modify the MRIP index used in the assessment model.
5. Explore age- and time-varying natural mortality from, for example, predator-prey relationships; quantify effects of age- and time-varying mortality on the assessment model.
6. Continue to evaluate the spatial, temporal, and sector-specific trends in bluefish growth and quantify their effects in the assessment model.

7. Continue to examine alternative models that take advantage of length-based assessment frameworks. Evaluate the source of bimodal length frequency in the catch (e.g., migration, differential growth rates – also multiple cohorts as noted by the PRT).
8. Modify thermal niche model to incorporate water temperature data more appropriate for bluefish in a timelier manner [e.g., sea surface temperature data & temperature data that cover the full range of bluefish habitat (including South Atlantic Bight and estuaries)].

### **VIII. Plan Review Team Comments and Recommendations**

- The PRT found that all states implemented regulations consistent with the intent of Amendment 1 and Addendum I of the Bluefish Interstate FMP.
- Maine, South Carolina and Georgia requested and meet the requirements for *de minimis* status for 2020.
- Results from an August 2019 operational assessment of bluefish (with data through 2018, including calibrated MRIP estimates) suggest the bluefish stock was overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2018 relative to updated biological reference points.
- The TC should review the effectiveness of the Addendum I sampling design and reevaluate the optimal geographic range and sample size for bluefish age data.
- The PRT recommends that the TC look into the increased importance of recreational discards in stock assessments. Generating reliable discard length data from recreational anglers could improve the robustness of stock assessments moving forward.

### **IX. References**

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## X. Tables

Table 1. 2019 and 2020 state-specific shares of commercial bluefish quota and 2019 estimated harvest by weight (lbs). Landings data source: SAFIS (query date: June 6, 2019). C = landings values are confidential.

State	% of Federal Quota	2019 Initial Quota*	2019 Transfers	2019 Final Quota	2019 Landings	Overages	% Quota Used	% Coastwide Total	2020 Initial Quota
ME	0.6685	51,538		51,538	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	18,496
NH	0.4145	31,956		31,956	C	C	C	C	11,468
MA	6.7167	517,828		517,828	184,171.15	0	37.9%	6.2%	185,838
RI	6.8081	524,875		524,873	415,809.28	0	84.3%	13.9%	188,367
CT	1.2663	97,626		97,626	35,550.7	0	38.8%	1.2%	35,036
NY	10.3851	800,646		800,646	594,841.98	0	79.1%	19.9%	287,335
NJ	14.8162	1,142,265		1,142,263	203,271.95	0	18.9%	6.8%	409,935
DE	1.8782	144,801		144,801	17,165.5	0	12.6%	0.6%	51,966
MD	3.0018	231,426		231,426	22,775.5	0	10.5%	0.8%	83,054
VA	11.8795	915,858		915,858	12,4681	0	14.5%	4.2%	328,682
NC	32.0608	2,471,748		2,471,747	1,107,902.48	0	47.7%	37.0%	887,059
SC	0.0352	2,714		2,714	C	C	C	C	974
GA	0.0095	732		732	C	C	C	C	263
FL	10.0597	775,559		775,559	284696	0	39.1%	9.5%	278,332
<b>TOTAL<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>7,709,565</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,709,565</b>	<b>2,990,866</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>41%</b>		<b>2,766,801</b>

<sup>^</sup> totals in table may not match listed quotas due to rounding

Table 2. Estimated bluefish recreational harvest (A + B1), releases (B2), dead discards (DD; 15% of B2), total catch (A+B1+B2), and total removals (Harvest + DDs) in numbers of fish by marine recreational anglers, 2010 to 2019. Source: MRIP. These estimates may differ from MRIP estimates depending on query date (Data queried June 5, 2020).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Catch (A+B1+B2)</b>	<b>Harvest (A+B1)</b>	<b>Released (B2)</b>	<b>DDs (15% of B2)</b>	<b>Total Removals (Harvest + DD)</b>
2010	62,350,110	21,929,519	40,420,591	6,063,089	27,992,608
2011	58,290,651	20,814,884	37,475,767	5,621,365	26,436,249
2012	50,658,364	18,578,836	32,079,528	4,811,929	23,390,765
2013	53,494,663	19,975,050	33,519,613	5,027,942	25,002,992
2014	55,093,764	21,510,650	33,583,114	5,037,467	26,548,117
2015	42,148,963	13,725,107	28,423,856	4,263,578	17,988,685
2016	42,528,744	14,899,721	27,629,023	4,144,353	19,044,074
2017	42,163,134	13,845,808	28,317,326	4,247,599	18,093,407
2018	30,928,700	10,245,708	20,682,992	3,102,449	13,348,157
2019	38,631,935	12,137,289	26,494,646	3,974,197	16,111,486
<b>Average</b>	<b>47,628,903</b>	<b>16,766,257</b>	<b>30,862,646</b>	<b>4,629,397</b>	<b>21,395,654</b>

Table 3. Bluefish Commercial Landings and Recreational Harvest (A + B1) by weight (metric tons, pounds), 2010-2019. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse (personal correspondence with Joseph Myers) and MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (2019 commercial data queried April 2020; recreational data queried June 6, 2020).

Year	Commercial		Recreational (A + B1)		Total	
	MT	Pounds	MT	Pounds	MT	Pounds
2010	3,304	7,284,462	21,003	46,302,792	24,307	53,587,254
2011	2,454	5,409,957	15,522	34,218,747	17,975	39,628,704
2012	2,212	4,876,858	14,756	32,530,917	16,968	37,407,775
2013	1,977	4,359,274	15,603	34,398,329	17,580	38,757,603
2014	2,251	4,962,903	12,267	27,044,276	14,518	32,007,179
2015	1,917	4,225,547	13,653	30,098,649	15,569	34,324,196
2016	1,946	4,289,427	10,957	24,155,304	12,902	28,444,731
2017	1,876	4,135,726	14,548	32,071,433	16,423	36,207,159
2018	1,102	2,429,190	6,020	13,270,862	7,121	15,700,052
2019	1,357	2,990,889	7,056	15,555,889	8,413	18,546,778
<b>Average</b>	<b>2,040</b>	<b>4,496,423</b>	<b>13,138</b>	<b>28,964,720</b>	<b>15,178</b>	<b>33,461,143</b>

Table 4. Status of compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements, 2019 (Y = compliance standards met, N = compliance standards not met, NA = not applicable).

State/ Jurisdiction	Fishery-independent monitoring		Fishery-dependent monitoring		Annual Reporting Status
	Survey(s)	Status	Type(s)	Status (num. of age samples)	
ME*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
NH	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
MA	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (96)	Y
RI	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (123)	Y
CT	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (140)	Y
NY	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (205)	Y
NJ	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (201)	Y
DE	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
MD	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
PRFC	Juvenile	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
VA	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (399)	Y
NC	Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest, Age Samples	Y (965)	Y
SC*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
GA*	NA	NA	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y
FL	Juvenile, Adult	Y	Rec and Com harvest	NA	Y

\*granted *de minimis* for 2019 fishing season

Table 5. Fishery regulations by state, 2019. Minimum size are in total length (TL) except for GA and FL are in fork length (FL).

State/ Jurisdiction	Recreational			Commercial	
	Bag Limit	Season	Size Limit	Trip and Size Limit	Open Season
ME	3 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
NH	10 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	July 1 - Sept 30
MA	10 fish	All year	None	5,000 lbs/day or trip (whichever is longer)	All year
RI	15 fish	All year	None	12" min size; 1,000 lbs/bi-wk (1.1-4.30) 8,000 lbs/wk (5.1-11.09) 500 lbs/wk (11.10-12.31)	All year
CT	10 fish	All year	None	9" min size; 1,200 lbs/trip	All year
NY	15 fish	All year	Only 10 fish <12"	9" min size; Trip Limit: 5,000 lbs (Jan- April); 750 lbs (May-Aug); 500 lbs (Sept-Oct); 1,000 lbs (Nov-Dec)	All year
NJ	15 fish	All year	None	9" min size	Closed to H&L from 1.1-6.15 and 8.8-12.31
DE	10 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
MD	10 fish	All year	8" min size	8" min size	All year
PRFC	10 fish	All year	8" min size	Trip limits after 80% of VA- MD quota is landed	All year
VA	10 fish	All year	None	No Restrictions	All year
NC	15 fish	All year	Only 5 fish > 24"	No Restrictions	All year
SC	15 fish	All year	None	No directed fishery	All year
GA	15 fish	All year	12" min size	12" min size; 15 fish	All Year
FL	10 fish	All year	12" min size	12" min size; 7,500 lbs/day	All year



## XI. Figures

Figure 1. Estimated recreational bluefish harvest (A + B1), releases (B2) and dead discards by recreational anglers in numbers of fish, 1985-2019. Note: Harvest and dead discards are additive. Source: MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (data queried June 5, 2020).

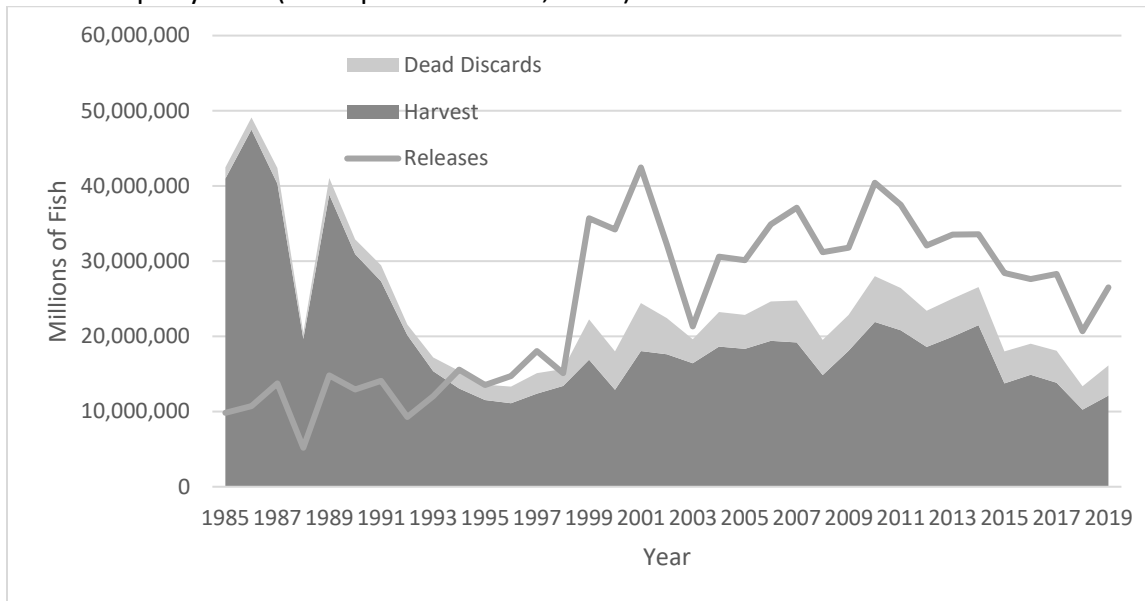


Figure 2. Bluefish recreational harvest and commercial landings estimates by weight, 1985-2019. Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse (personal correspondence with Joseph Myers) and MRIP. Estimates may differ from source websites depending on query date (Commercial data queried April 2020).

