

# Final Agenda

Please note that minor changes have been made to the time and schedule for meetings on Monday, February 1 and Tuesday, February 2; and a minor agenda modification to Thursday, February 4 ISFMP Policy Board.

The agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. It is our intent to begin at the scheduled start time for each meeting, however, if meetings run late the next meeting may start later than originally planned.

## Monday, February 1

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

### **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**

*Member States:* Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina

*Other Members:* NMFS, PRFC, USFWS

*Chair:* Nowalsky

*Other Participants:* Wojcik, Snellbaker

*Staff:* Colson Leaning, Lewis

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*A. Nowalsky*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from August 2020
3. Public Comment
4. 2021 Recreational Management Measures for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass (*D. Colson Leaning, S. Lewis*)
  - Consider State Proposals for Adjusting 2021 Recreational Measures **Possible Action**
  - Consider Virginia Proposal for Wave 1 Recreational Black Sea Bass Fishery **Final Action**
5. Recess for ISFMP Policy Board & Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC)  
Discussion on Recreational Management Reform Initiative

10:15 – 11:45 a.m.

### **Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

*Other Members:* DC, NMFS, PRFC, USFWS

*Board Chair:* Keliher

*Other Participants:* Beaty

*Staff:* Kerns

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*P. Keliher*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from August 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review State Membership on Species Management Boards (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
  - Review State Declared Species of Interest

5. Discuss Recreational Management Reform Initiative (*J. Beaty*) **Possible Action** *This agenda item will be discussed jointly with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council*
6. Recess until Thursday, February 4 at 1:45 p.m.

**11:45 – 12:45 p.m. Lunch Break**

**12:45 – 4:30 p.m. Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board and MAFMC**

*Member States:* Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina

*Other Members:* NMFS, PRFC, USFWS

*Board Chair:* Nowalsky

*MAFMC Chair:* Luisi

*Other Participants:* Wojcik, Snellbaker

*Staff:* Colson Leaning, Lewis

6. Reconvene as a Joint Meeting with MAFMC
7. Consider Draft Addendum XXXIII and MAFMC Amendment on Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocations for Final Approval (*S. Lewis, C. Starks*) **Final Action**
8. Other Business/Adjourn

**Tuesday, February 2**

**8:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. American Lobster Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia

*Other Members:* NEFMC, NMFS

*Chair:* McKiernan

*Other Participants:* Reardon, Perry, Beal, Anderson, Shank

*Staff:* Starks

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*D. McKiernan*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review and Discuss Proposed Rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Proposed Modifications for 2021 (*J. Anderson*)
5. Consider Management Response to the 2020 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review (*D. McKiernan*) **Possible Action**
  - Review Stock Status, Reference Points and Assessment Recommendations (*C. Starks*)
  - Discuss Development of Draft Addendum XXVII on Gulf of Maine Resiliency (*C. Starks*)
6. Discuss Potential for Conducting a Management Strategy Evaluation for the American Lobster Fishery (*B. Shank/J. Kipp*)
7. Discuss Executive Order on Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (*C. Starks*) **Possible Action**
8. Review and Populate Jonah Crab Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
9. Elect Vice-Chair **Action**
10. Other Business/Adjourn

**12:45 – 1:45 p.m.**

**Lunch Break**

**1:45 – 2:30 p.m.**

**Winter Flounder Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey

*Other Members:* NMFS

*Chair:* Borden

*Other Participants:* Nitschke, Blanchard, Brown

*Staff:* Colson Leaning

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*D. Borden*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Consider Specifications for the 2021 Fishing Year (*D. Colson Leaning*) **Final Action**
  - Technical Committee Report
  - Advisory Panel Report
5. Other Business/Adjourn

**2:45 – 4:00 p.m.**

**Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

*Other Members:* NMFS, PRFC, USFWS

*Chair:* Woodward

*Other Participants:* Newhard, Kersey

*Staff:* Rootes-Murdy

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*S. Woodward*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review Recent Fishery Performance Relative to Commercial Allocations (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
5. Other Business/Adjourn

**4:15 – 5:15 p.m.**

**Atlantic Herring Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey

*Other Members:* NEFMC, NMFS

*Chair:* Patterson

*Other Participants:* Zobel, Brown

*Staff:* Rootes-Murdy, Franke

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*C. Patterson*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020

3. Public Comment
4. Set Sub-Annual Catch Limit for 2021-2023 Fishing Years (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Final Action**
5. Update on Amendment 8 and Consider Impacts to the Area 1A Fishery (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
6. Update on New England Fishery Management Council and Commission Coordination Discussions (*R. Beal*)
7. Other Business/Adjourn

**Wednesday, February 3**

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

**Executive Committee**

*Members:* Abbott, Anderson, Batsavage, Bell, Bowman, Cimino, Clark, Davis, Estes, Gilmore, Keliher, Kuhn, McKiernan, McNamee, Miller, Patterson, Woodward

*Chair:* Keliher

*Other Participants:* Kelly Denit

*Staff:* Leach

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*P. Keliher*)
2. Committee Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Meeting Summary from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Update on Second Round of CARES Act Assistance (*R. Beal*)
5. Legislative and Appropriations Update (*R. Beal*)
6. Review Letter to the Office of Management and Budget Regarding Commission's FY22 Funding Priorities (*R. Beal*)
7. Discuss Legislative Committee Membership (*R. Beal*)
8. Future Annual Meeting Update (*L. Leach*)
9. Other Business/Adjourn

10:15 – 11:00 a.m.

**Coastal Sharks Management Board**

*Member States:* Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

*Other Members:* NMFS

*Chair:* Batsavage

*Other Participants:* Willey, Garner, McCandless

*Staff:* Rootes-Murdy

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*C. Batsavage*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from February 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review NOAA Fisheries Cooperative Shark Tagging Program (*C. McCandless*)
5. Update from NOAA Fisheries on Highly Migratory Species Management (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)
6. Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
7. Other Business/Adjourn

**11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council**

*Partners:* ASMFC, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, MAFMC, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, NEFMC, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, NMFS, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, PRFC, Rhode Island, SAFMC, South Carolina, USFWS, Virginia  
*Chair:* Carmichael  
*Staff:* White

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*J. Carmichael*)
2. Council Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Minutes from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review Project and Program Funding (*G. White*) **Action**
5. Other Business/Adjourn

**12:15 – 1:45 p.m. Lunch Break**

**1:45 – 5:00 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina  
*Other Members:* DC, NMFS, PRFC, USFWS  
*Chair:* Borden  
*Other Participants:* Sullivan, Blanchard  
*Staff:* Franke

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*D. Borden*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Review Technical Committee Report on Release Mortality Sensitivity Runs (*K. Sullivan*)
5. Consider Stock Assessment Update Timeline (*K. Drew*) **Action**
6. Discuss Circle Hook Implementation (*T. Kerns*) **Possible Final Action**
7. Consider Draft Amendment 7 Public Information Document for Public Comment (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
8. Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
9. Other Business/Adjourn

**Thursday, February 4**

**8:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

**Shad and River Herring Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

*Other Members:* DC, NMFS, PRFC, USFWS

*Other Participants:* Sprankle, Furlong, Lyons Gromen, Neilan

*Chair:* Armstrong

*Staff:* Starks

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*M. Armstrong*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from August 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Consider Management Response to 2020 Shad Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review (*M. Armstrong*)
  - Review Technical Committee Recommendations (*B. Neilan*)
  - Advisory Panel Report (*P. Lyons Gromen*)
5. Review Technical Committee Recommendations on Improvements to Amendments 2 and 3 (*B. Neilan*) **Possible Action**
6. Consider Shad Habitat Plan Updates **Action**
  - Review Technical Committee Recommendations (*B. Neilan*)
7. Consider Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance for the 2019 Fishing Year (*C. Starks*) **Action**
8. Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
9. Other Business/Adjourn

**11:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Lunch Break**

**12:45 – 1:30 p.m.**

**Bluefish Management Board**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

*Other Members:* NMFS, PRFC

*Chair:* Batsavage

*Other Participants:* Celestino, Kersey

*Staff:* Colson Leaning

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*C. Batsavage*)
2. Board Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from August 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Consider Revisions to the Addendum I Biological Monitoring Program (*D. Colson Leaning*) **Final Action**
5. Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
6. Other Business/Adjourn

**1:45 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

7. Reconvene from February 1, 2021
8. Public Comment
9. Executive Committee Report (*P. Keliher*)
10. Progress Update on the Risk and Uncertainty Policy (*J. McNamee*)
  - Review Draft of the Risk and Uncertainty Policy
  - Discuss Steps to Consider Final Approval of the Policy
11. Review and Discuss 2020 Commissioner Survey Results (*D. Tompkins*)
12. Review State Membership on Species Management Boards (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
  - Review Pennsylvania’s Membership on the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board
13. Discuss Commission Process for Working on Recreational Reform Issues with the MAFMC (*T. Kerns*)
14. Discuss Possible Reporting Programs to Capture Recreational Release Data (*T. Kerns*)
15. Committee Reports (*L. Havel*) **Action**
  - Habitat Committee
  - Artificial Reef Committee
  - Atlantic Coast Fisheries Habitat Partnership
16. Review Noncompliance Findings (if necessary) **Action**
17. Other Business/Adjourn

**4:15 – 4:30 p.m. Business Session**

*Member States:* Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida  
*Chair:* Keliher  
*Staff:* Beal

1. Welcome/Call to Order (*P. Keliher*)
2. Committee Consent
  - Approval of Agenda
  - Approval of Proceedings from October 2020
3. Public Comment
4. Consider Noncompliance Recommendations (if necessary) **Final Action**
5. Other Business/Adjourn

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

January 28, 2021

Mr. Chris Moore  
Executive Director  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Mr. Robert E. Beal  
Executive Director  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200-A-N  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Moore and Mr. Beal:

In advance of the February ASMFC meeting, we write to request strong support for two potential methodologies which would provide urgently needed fairness to Connecticut fishermen with respect to commercial black sea bass harvest allocations.

As we expressed to you in the letter we sent on this topic in December, the black sea bass population in the Southern New England region has increased significantly for several decades due to changes in ocean temperatures. Unfortunately, Connecticut's quota has not been updated to reflect the northward expansion of black sea bass and remains at only 1% of the entire coastwide quota – a quota which has not been changed in almost 18 years. It is unconscionable that Connecticut fishermen still have a quota five times smaller than the state with the next smallest allocation (Delaware) given the unprecedented abundance of sea bass off our coast.

To this end, we again request that the ASMFC and MAFMC increase Connecticut's black sea bass allocation to 5 percent of the coastwide quota. We firmly believe that increasing Connecticut's quota to 5 percent, equal to the allocation assigned to the next lowest state, remains the fairest approach taking into account the growth of the sea bass population in the Northeast in comparison to the more stable numbers in southern regions.

We do understand that these conversations have been difficult, and are aware of opposition to this proposal from a number of states. While we continue to believe that an immediate 5 percent allocation to Connecticut is the most equitable path forward, we also understand that there is another option being discussed that we feel is worth considering should the 5 percent allocation not receive the votes necessary to move forward. This is a "trigger" approach, in which the trigger would be set at either 3.0 or 3.5 million pounds, per tradition, with any given year's quota above the trigger being used first to increase Connecticut's quota to 5 percent and New York's to 9 percent, and then for the remaining quota to be allocated proportionally among the states. This approach would achieve a number of admirable objectives – Connecticut's concerns would be dealt with fairly, northern states would benefit from the expanding population of black sea bass in their waters, and southern regions would have their historic allocation protected and would continue to benefit from the overall growth of the sea bass population. In order for this approach to be equitable it is essential that the trigger to be set at 3.5 million pounds or less as this amount is reflective of historical quota allocations. Implemented thusly, this bifurcated approach would



provide fairness to our fishermen, and we believe should be seriously considered if the ASMFC and MAFMC cannot reach a consensus on giving Connecticut 5 percent of the quota outright.

We appreciate your consideration of this fundamentally important issue to our region. Should you need supporting documentation or information, please do not hesitate to contact us.


Sincerely,




JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress




RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY  
United States Senate



ROSA L. DELAURO  
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress



JIM HIMES  
Member of Congress



JAHANA HAYES  
Member of Congress

CC:

Sherry White  
Assistant Regional Director of Fish and Aquatic Conservation  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
300 Westgate Center Drive  
Hadley, MA 01035

Michael Pentony  
Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

January 28, 2021

Wynn Coggins  
Acting Secretary of Commerce  
United States Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Secretary Coggins:

I write today in advance of the February 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) where they are scheduled to deliberate final action on the Commission's *Draft Addendum XXXIII* and the Council's *Black Sea Bass Commercial State Allocation Amendment*. As you know, this joint action by the Council and Commission will consider adjusting the current state-by-state commercial fishing harvest allocations for states from Maine through North Carolina based on current distribution and abundance. This pending decision by fisheries managers is of paramount importance to me and the commercial fishermen within my home state of New York who have been historically disenfranchised by fisheries managers when redistributing quota to address shifts in biomass. Previous joint decisions by the Council and Commission with regard to the reallocation of quota have not adequately reflected the shift in stock and have been inconsistent with the requirement of fair and equitable allocation among fishermen described in National Standard Four of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In order to achieve a more equitable distribution of quota based on the most current and accurate assessments of stock, I urge you to consider adopting the Dynamic Adjustments to Regional Allocations (DARA) management option for the Addendum and the Amendment.

As you are aware, the most recent black sea bass stock assessment shows that there has been a significant increase in biomass and a change in distribution of the resource. Eighty-four percent of the biomass is now located in the northern region while 16% of the biomass remains in the southern region. Despite significant shifts in the geographic distribution of the stock, the quota allocations still reflect antiquated distributions; while the northern region has 84% of the biomass, its fishermen are only allotted 33% of the total fishery's harvest. Next week's action must address this discrepancy and produce a more fair and equitable quota distribution for New York's fishermen.

New York's fishermen are all too familiar with inequities created by a commercial fishing state-by-state quota allocation system which does not adequately account for stock distribution. New York's anglers have long suffered under the current federal fisheries regime as it pertains to the management of the summer flounder (fluke) fishery. Created from a previous decision by the Council and the Commission, the current fluke allocation system has hamstrung New York's commercial fishermen since it was enacted and placed them at a serious disadvantage by basing allocation decisions on incomplete historical catch data and by failing to update allocations to reflect shifts in stocks due to climate change. Though the ASMFC and MAFMC sought to address this problem through Amendment 21, the Amendment still distributes the majority of the

quota based on inaccurate historical data, resulting in continued inequitable treatment of New York fishermen. This unfair and inequitable allocation of fluke quota runs contrary to National Standard Four of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and serves as forewarning for any decision by the Council and Commission regarding black sea bass not based on the latest stock assessment.

I am concerned that a similar scenario will occur for black sea bass. Another allocation based on regional historic catch would fail to reflect the current distribution of biomass which has shifted northward in response to climate change. In the case of the fluke fishery, reluctance to adjust allocations to take shifting stocks into account resulted in New York and other states in the northern region receiving an unfair and inequitable portion of the fishing quota. This must not be repeated with black sea bass.

Again, I ask that National Standard Four be carefully considered during this reallocation process so that the states in the northern region, which have the greatest portion of biomass off their shores, have a truly fair and equitable allocation. Of the possible reallocation options contained in the Amendment and Addendum, the use of Dynamic Adjustments to Regional Allocations (DARA) may have the least likelihood of violating Standard Four.

So it is with great interest that I will be following the joint meeting next week with the hopes of a fair and equitable distribution of quota that is more in alignment with biomass distribution. Thank you for your attention to this matter and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out to my staff.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator

CC:

Gina Raimondo, Nominee for the Secretary of Commerce, U.S. Department of Commerce

Dr. Paul Doremus, Acting Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries

Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Robert Beal, Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Mike Pentony, Regional Administrator, NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 N. Highland Street • Suite 200A-N • Arlington, VA 22201  
703.842.0740 • 703.842.0741 (fax) • www.asmfc.org

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO: American Lobster Management Board**

**FROM: Caitlin Starks, FMP Coordinator**

**DATE: January 15, 2021**

**SUBJECT: REVISED - Review of American Lobster Stock Status, Reference Points, and Recommendations from 2020 Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review**

At its October 2020 meeting, the American Lobster Board (Board) reviewed the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, and accepted it for management use. The Board also adopted the new reference points as recommended by the assessment, and committed to considering management responses to the assessment findings at its next meeting in February 2021. This memo provides a summary of new reference points, stock status determinations, and recommendations from the assessment and peer review for each lobster stock, which the Board should consider in its discussion on appropriate management responses to the assessment findings.

### **Abundance and Exploitation Reference Points**

New abundance and exploitation reference points were adopted based on the recommendations of the 2020 stock assessment, with the rationale that the former reference points were not appropriate given changes in environmental conditions. The updated reference points were derived from a new methodology that accounts for changing environmental conditions and new baselines for stock productivity. Regime shift analysis indicated that the GOM/GBK stock shifted from a low abundance regime during the early 1980s through 1995 to a moderate abundance regime during 1996-2008, and shifted once again to a high abundance regime during 2009-2018 (Figure 1). Conversely, the SNE stock shifted from a high abundance regime during the early 1980s through 2002 to a low abundance regime during 2003-2018 (Figure 3).

Three reference points are used to characterize stock abundance. The abundance threshold is calculated as the average of the three highest abundance years during the low abundance regime. A stock abundance level below this threshold is considered significantly depleted and in danger of stock collapse. This was the only abundance reference point recommended for the SNE stock due to its record low abundance and low likelihood of reaching this threshold in the near future. The abundance limit is calculated as the median abundance during the moderate abundance regime. Stock abundance that falls below this limit is considered depleted because the stock's ability to replenish itself is diminished. The fishery/industry target is calculated as the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the abundance during the high abundance regime. In this case, when abundance falls below this target, the stock's ability to replenish itself is not jeopardized, but it may indicate a degrading of economic conditions for the lobster fishery.

Two reference points are used to evaluate the fishing mortality condition of the stocks. The exploitation threshold is calculated as the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of exploitation (annual catch in numbers divided by abundance) during the current abundance regime. The stock is considered to be experiencing overfishing if exploitation exceeds the exploitation threshold. The exploitation target is calculated as the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of exploitation during the current abundance regime.

### **Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock Status**

Based on the updated reference points, the GOM/GBK stock is not depleted and overfishing is not occurring (Figures 1 and 2, respectively). The average abundance from 2016-2018 was 256 million lobster, which is greater than the fishery/industry target of 212 million lobster. The average exploitation from 2016-2018 was 0.459, below the exploitation target of 0.461. Stock projections conducted as part of the assessment suggested a low probability of abundance declining below the abundance target over the next 10 years.

### **Southern New England Stock Status**

Based on the updated reference points, the SNE stock is significantly depleted and overfishing is not occurring (Figures 3 and 4, respectively). The average abundance from 2016-2018 was 7 million lobster, well below the abundance threshold of 20 million lobster. The average exploitation from 2016-2018 was 0.274, falling between the exploitation threshold of 0.290 and the exploitation target of 0.257. Exploitation is not considered favorable as it exceeds the target.

Stock projections conducted as part of the assessment show a low probability of the stock condition changing among the most credible scenarios. In the absence of mortality, reference abundance would be projected to increase with recruit abundance exceeding the maximum abundance for the current regime (Figure 5). However, increases in abundance are likely to be limited due to the projected continuing decline in recruitment.

The assessment's model estimates and non-model based stock indicators results suggest careful consideration of key issues for the SNE stock:

1. Recruitment indices indicate that the stock is not rebuilding and is in recruitment failure.
2. The contraction of the stock distribution has continued and is becoming apparent in the offshore portion as well as the inshore.
3. The total SNE landings have continued to decline, and the 2018 landings were a time series low.
4. Disease remains high in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and all four temperature indicators are negative. The stressful environment may be having both lethal and sublethal effects.
5. There is evidence that environmental influences have resulted in a decreasing recruitment rate. Substantive measures are needed to increase adult abundance in order to improve recruitment success.

## **Assessment and Peer Review Recommendations**

### ***GOM/GBK***

Based on the favorable condition of the GOM/GBK stock, the 2020 Stock Assessment and Peer Review Reports did not recommend any management action for the stock at this time. Both reports did recommend an economic analysis be performed to provide advice on appropriate action to stabilize the fishery when abundance falls below the target.

### ***SNE***

For the SNE stock, the Assessment and Peer Review Reports did not recommend specific management measures to address the overfished stock status determination. However, in the definition of the abundance threshold reference point, the report states “significant management action to halt the decline of abundance and increase reproductive capacity and recruitment to the stock, such as a moratorium, is recommended if abundance falls below this threshold.”

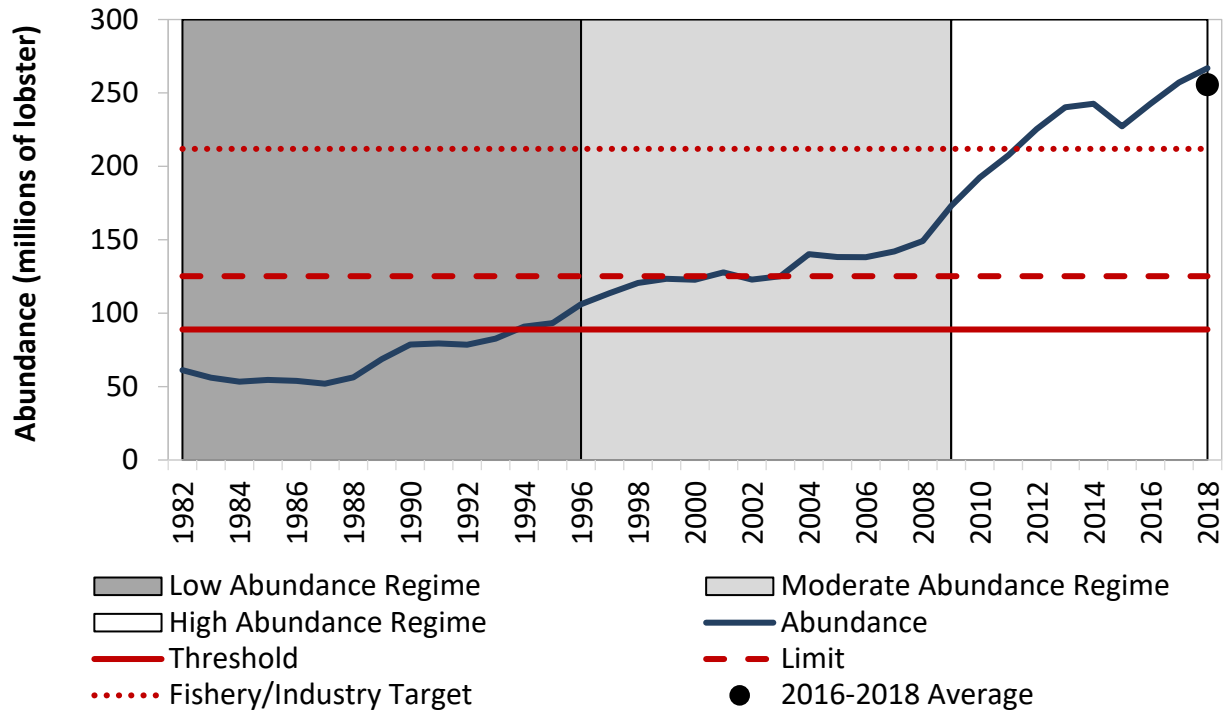
### ***Both Stocks***

The Peer Review Panel agreed with the Stock Assessment Subcommittee recommendation to initiate an annual data update to monitor changes to stock abundance. The Panel supported annual updates of all indicators to provide insights into lobster and fishery dynamics, and the development of a science-based rule to specify conditions that would trigger an earlier than scheduled assessment. For example, if three of four indicators change from positive to neutral, the timing of the next benchmark assessment would be advanced.

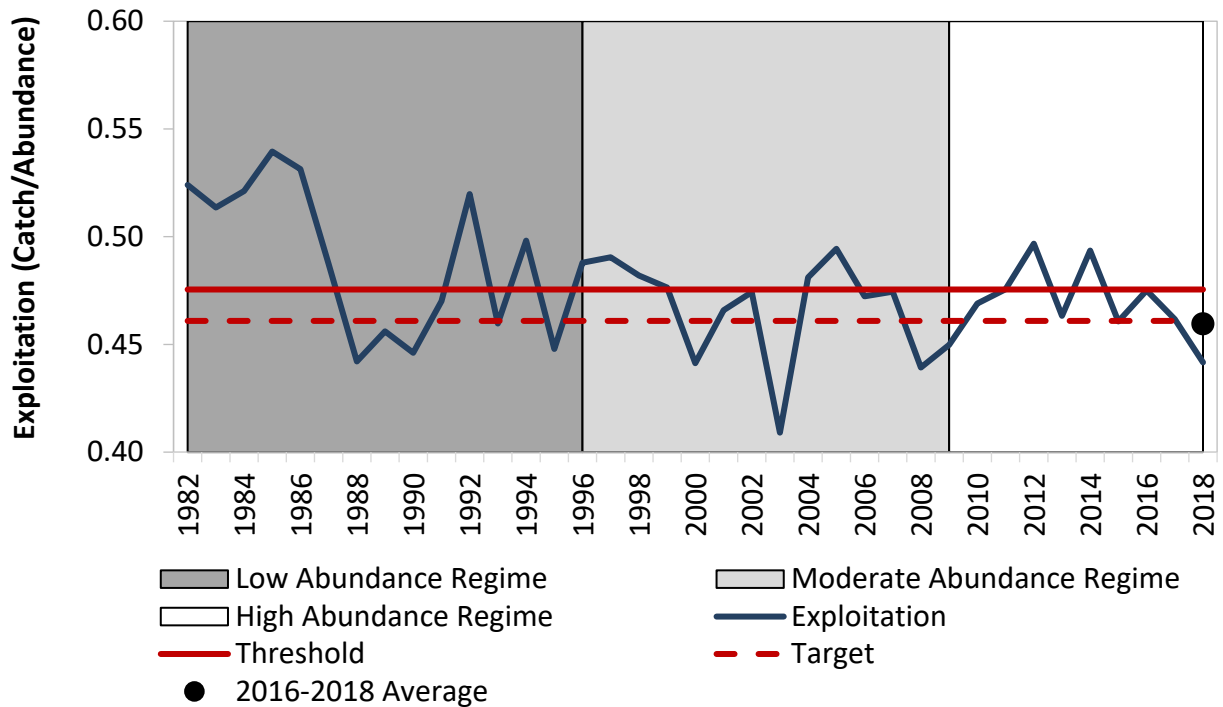
The Panel also recommends continued use and exploration of the indicators to understand the relative merits of indicator-based management for various types of management controls. For example, preliminary analyses conducted during the review suggested relatively strong correlations between model outputs and select indicators that may be useful for management, with continued exploration.

Lastly, the Panel suggested a management strategy evaluation could inform appropriate management targets or measures to meet defined objectives.

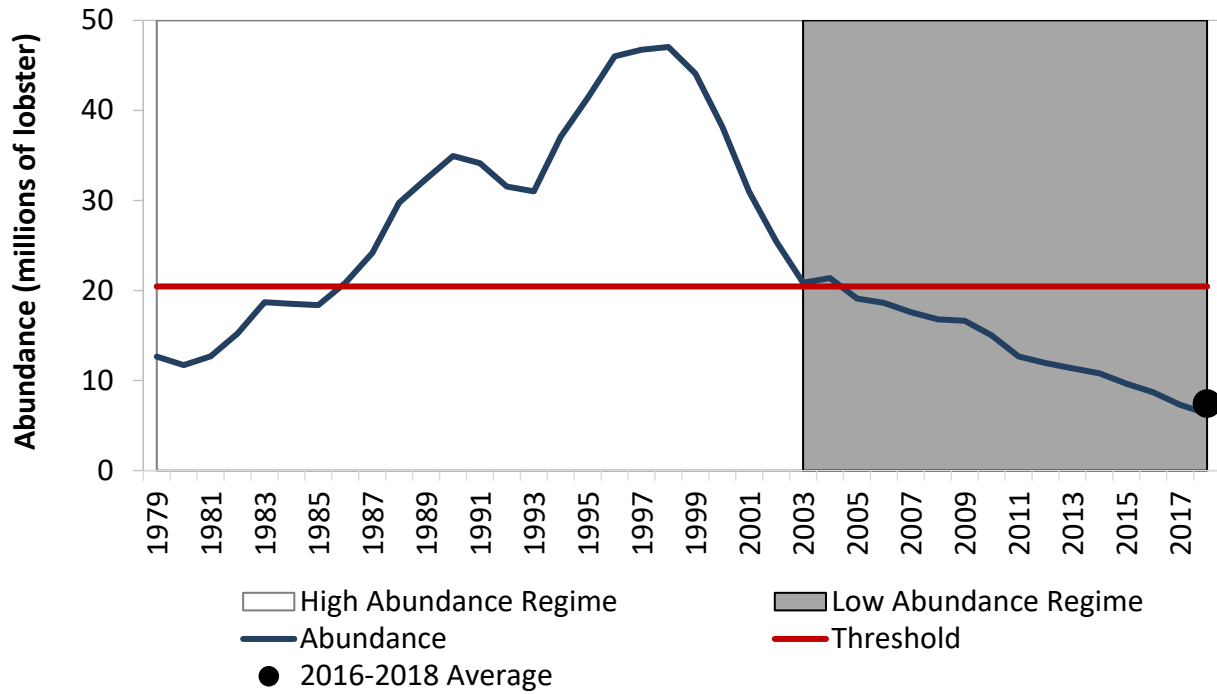
**Figure 1. Abundance for GOM/GBK Relative to Reference Points**



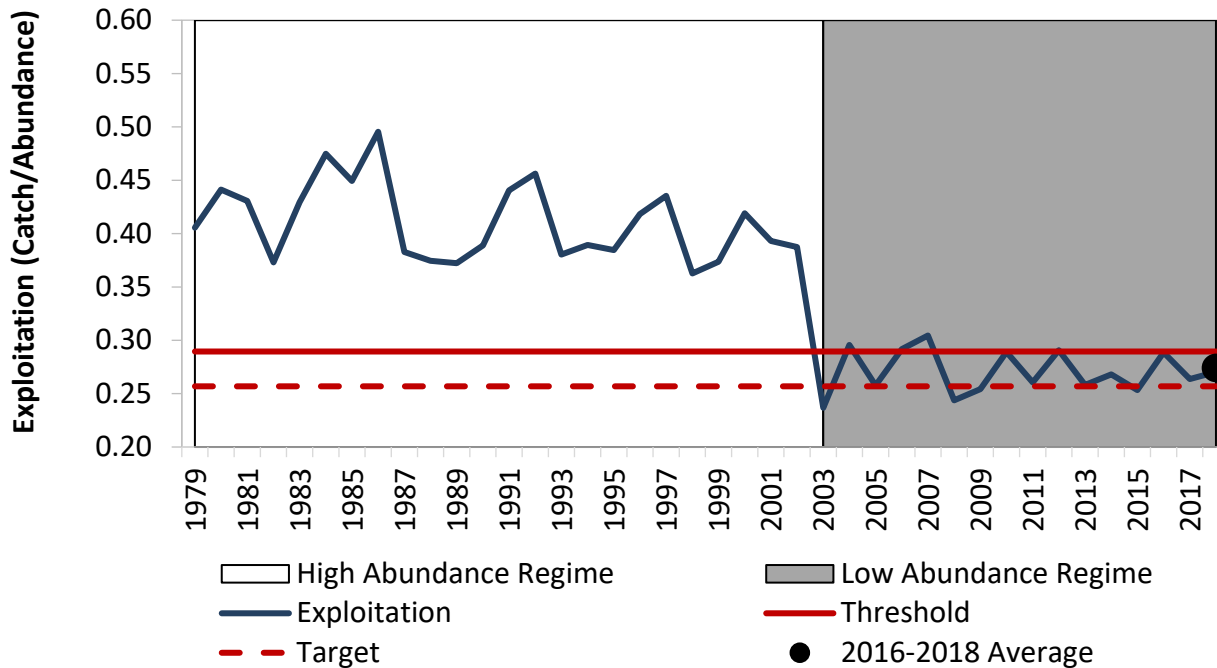
**Figure 2. Exploitation for GOM/GBK Relative to Reference Points**



**Figure 3. Abundance for SNE Relative to Reference Points - REVISED**



**Figure 4. Exploitation for SNE Relative to Reference Points - REVISED**





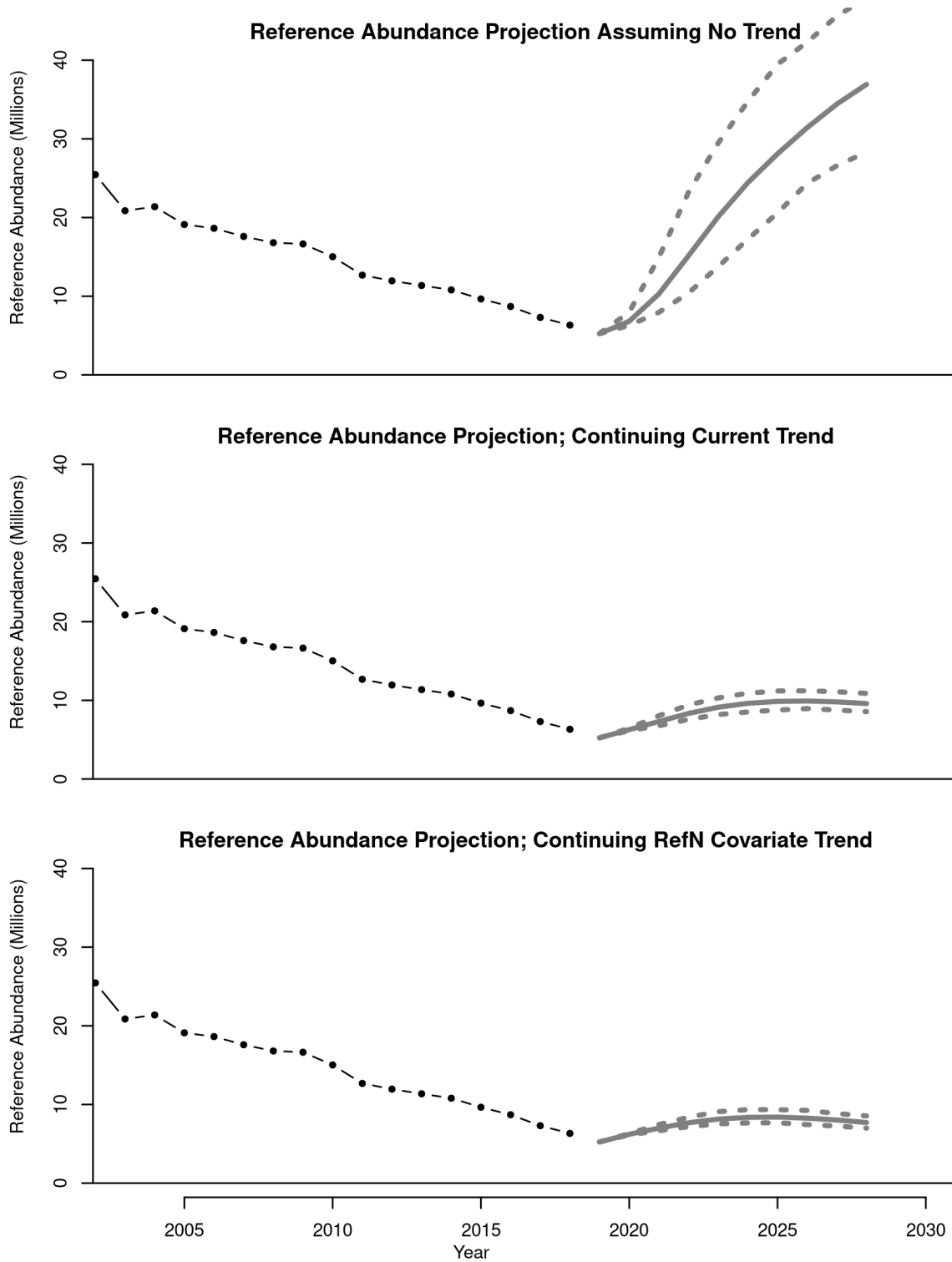


Figure 5. SNE reference abundance estimates for the current regime and projection scenarios for a no fishing mortality scenario. Source: 2020 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment.

**From:** [Dominick Pucci](#)  
**To:** [Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [External] Please Forward to ASMFC Striped Bass Committee  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 8:05:02 PM

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Please forward to the Atlantic States Marine Fishing Council's Striped Bass Management Board ASAP.

Dear ASMFC Striped Bass Management Board Members

As a life-long striped bass fisherman for over 5 decades who's now enjoying his retirement along Maine's Midcoast fishing for striped bass just about every day from late May to early October. The fish is my passion and obsession.

After reading the *Proposal to Study the Tube Rig Fishery and Consider Its Exemption from the Circle Hook Provision* prepared by Maine DMR and Massachusetts DMF, I feel it is imperative for the Striped Bass Management Board approve the necessary circle hook exemption to allow the data for this proposal to be accurately accumulated. There is no secret among people who actually fish for striped bass using the tube and worm technique that anything but a lip hooked fish is an extremely rare exception.

The study outlines how to bolster the data returned from the MRIP studies. Additionally, Maine and Massachusetts have committed to getting some of their employees out on the water to collect tube and worm data. It's nice to see that some states have the good sense to send their marine fisheries personnel out on the water instead of keeping them chained to a computer screen. I would strongly suggest that other states do the same, and maybe some of the members of this committee also. It might be an eye-opening event for desk jockeys to actually deal with the subjects of their theoretical modeling.

Please give this proposal your serious consideration and approval. Such an action will prove to the fishing public that you truly respect and want to protect this resource, instead of paying lip service to it, as many accuse you of.

Sincerely,  
Dominick Pucci, PhD

**From:** [Rick Bellavance](#)  
**To:** [Comments](#)  
**Cc:** [DAVID BORDEN](#)  
**Subject:** [External] Striped Bass  
**Date:** Friday, January 29, 2021 9:22:47 AM

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Good Morning,

Could you please pass these comments to the Striped Bass Board for consideration at their Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting?

On behalf of the RI Party and Charter Boat Association, I would like to offer our support for conducting a Striped Bass Assessment in 2022. We understand the data gaps in recreational catch due to COVID and support delaying the assessment from 2021 until 2022. Striped Bass is very important to RI's For Hire Fleet and we strongly hope an updated assessment can be conducted no later than 2022. We also are hopeful that the PID for AMD 7 is approved for Public Comment. Lastly, we support modifications to the circle hook requirement that would allow for worms to be used with trolled tubes and pork rind to be used on bucktail jigs and trolled spoons.

Thanks,  
Rick Bellavance

*Capt. Rick Bellavance*, President  
RI Party and Charter Boat Association  
401-741-5648  
[www.rifishing.com](http://www.rifishing.com)

**From:** [John Lapenta](#)  
**To:** [Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [External] Striped bass  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 27, 2021 9:36:57 PM

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I'd like to express my support for exempting Tube N Worm the requirement to use circle hooks for all like bait fishing for stripers.

I caught more than 400 stripers this past spring using tube and worm with J hooks (90 keepers). Not a single was gut hooked. My theory is that the hookset with TnW occurs as soon as the fish hits. There is no opportunity for the bass to swallow and get gut hooked.

Best Regards,

John Lapenta

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10