



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 27, 2020
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Julia Beaty, staff
Subject: Recreational Reform Initiative - Topics Requiring an FMP Amendment vs. Framework/Addendum

During their June 2020 joint meeting, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board (Board) asked for clarification on which topics currently under consideration through the Recreational Reform Initiative, as well as topics removed from the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment could be pursued through an FMP framework/addendum and which would require a full FMP amendment.

The federal regulations describe the framework process and list the types of management changes which may be pursued through a framework action. The associated regulations for summer flounder are found at 50 CFR § 648.110 and are also included in the briefing materials for the August 6, 2020 joint meeting of the Council and the Board. The corresponding regulations for scup, black sea bass, and bluefish are very similar. These regulations list the types of management changes which may be considered through a framework as opposed to a full FMP amendment. Of note for the Recreational Reform Initiative and related discussions, the list of frameworkable items includes introduction of new accountability measures, permitting restrictions, recreational possession limits, recreational seasons, recreational harvest limits (RHLs), specifications quota setting process, any other recreational management measures, and any other measures currently included in the FMP.

It is important to emphasize that a framework may not always be appropriate even if the type of change falls within a category listed in the framework regulations. If the specific proposed action represents a significant departure from previously contemplated measures or otherwise introduces new concepts, an amendment may be more appropriate than a framework. This is expressly stated in the framework regulations for summer flounder, black sea bass, and bluefish.

The federal regulations and discussions with the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) staff suggest that the following topics discussed through the Recreational Reform Initiative and/or the Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment

could potentially be considered through a joint FMP framework/addendum, depending on the details of the specific change considered:

- Everything listed in the Recreational Reform Initiative outline developed by the Steering Committee, including:¹
 - Adopting a standardized process for identifying and smoothing outlier MRIP estimates.
 - Using an “envelope of uncertainty” approach when determining if changes in recreational management measures are needed (i.e., if next year’s RHL falls within a pre-defined range above and below the projected harvest estimate, then no changes would be made to management measures).
 - Evaluating the pros and cons of using preliminary current year MRIP data.
 - Developing guidelines for maintaining status quo measures.
 - Setting recreational management measures for two years at a time with a commitment to making no changes in the interim year unless required due to poor stock status.
 - Considering improvements to the process used to make changes to state and federal recreational management measures.
 - Changing the timing of the recommendation for federal waters recreational management measures from December of the previous year to October or August.
- Changes to recreational accountability measures, such as changes to requirements for payback of overages and in-season closures (a topic removed from the Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment).
- The pre-determined management measure step approach described in the Harvest Control Rule proposal put forward by 6 recreational fishing organizations through scoping for the Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment.²
- Changes to the data reported through VTRs (depending on the specifics of the change), assuming no changes are made to who is required to submit VTRs.

The following topics discussed through the Recreational Reform Initiative and/or the Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment would likely require an FMP Amendment:

- Private angler reporting - This has not been previously contemplated through the FMPs for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish. In addition, if private angler reporting for these species were to be managed at the federal level, it would require private anglers to obtain federal permits.
- Tagging programs for the recreational fisheries - This would likely require an amendment for similar reasons to those described above for private angler reporting.
- Mandatory tournament reporting - This would likely require an amendment for similar reasons to those described above for private angler reporting.

¹ Some items in the Steering Committee outline may not require an FMP change, but could be pursued through an FMP framework/addendum if desired by the Council and Board. See the Steering Committee outline for more details (https://www.mafmc.org/s/2Rec_reform_outline_v6.pdf).

² See the summary of July 14, 2020 Steering Committee meeting for more information (available in the [briefing materials](#) for the August 6, 2020 joint meeting of the Council and Board).

- Requiring additional entities to submit federal VTRs. For example, requiring private anglers and/or for-hire vessels which only operate in state waters to submit VTRs under the joint FMP would likely require an amendment as this has not been previously contemplated through the FMP and it would represent a notable change from current reporting requirements.