



Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda

Draft Action Plan

August 2024

<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/rec-measures-framework-addenda>

Framework/addenda goal: This management action is being developed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission). This is a follow-on action to the [Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda](#), which implemented the Percent Change Approach for setting recreational management measures. In adopting the Percent Change Approach, the Council and the Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) agreed it should sunset by the end of 2025 with the goal of considering an improved measures setting process, as developed through this management action, starting with 2026 measures.

Alternatives to be considered: The following list of alternatives is based on guidance provided to the FMAT/PDT by the Council and Policy Board during their June 2022, August 2023, December 2023, and August 2024 meetings. The range of alternatives may be further modified and refined prior to finalization for public hearings.

- **No Action Alternative** – Consideration of a no action alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act. If no action is taken by the Council and Policy Board to replace the Percent Change Approach before the sunset date, then the process for setting recreational measures, starting with 2026 measures, would revert back to the requirements of the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) prior to implementation of the Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda. Measures would be set with the primary goal of allowing harvest to meet but not exceed the recreational harvest limit (RHL). Unlike the other alternatives under consideration, measures would be set for one year at a time.
- **Percent Change Approach** – This approach was implemented starting with the 2023 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. It will also be used for bluefish once that stock is no longer in a rebuilding plan. Under the Percent Change Approach, a determination is made to either liberalize, restrict, or leave measures unchanged based on two factors: 1) Comparison of a confidence interval around an estimate of expected harvest under status quo measures to the average RHL for the upcoming two years and 2) Biomass compared to the target level, as defined by the most recent stock assessment. These two factors are used to define a target harvest level for setting management measures. The Percent Change Approach is described in detail in the [reference guide](#) and [final framework document](#) for the previous action.
- **Modified Percent Change Approach** – This action will consider a modified version of the Percent Change Approach with several improvements recommended by the FMAT/PDT.
- **Biomass Based Matrix Approach** - This alternative considers biomass compared to the target level and recent trends in biomass when determining whether measures should be modified to achieve a specified percentage liberalization or reduction in recreational harvest or dead catch, or if expected harvest/dead catch should remain status quo.

Other topics to be considered: Based on guidance provided during the June 2022, August 2023, December 2023, and August 2024 Council and Policy Board meetings, the FMAT/PDT will also consider the following additional topics through this management action. These are not management alternatives; rather, they are topics that will be considered in the context of the management alternatives listed above.

- **Target metric for setting measures** – The previous framework/addenda considered if recreational measures in state and federal waters should collectively aim to achieve a target level of harvest (e.g., based on the RHL), recreational dead catch (e.g., based on the recreational annual catch limit), or fishing mortality. This is being further considered through this action.
- **Management uncertainty** – This action will consider the implications of the alternatives for management uncertainty buffers as currently defined in the Fishery Management Plan.
- **Use of the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) model** – The previously developed Summer Flounder MSE model was used to analyze several aspects of this management action. A report on this work is available starting on page 51 of [this document](#).
- **Impacts on the commercial sector** – Although this action will only consider the process for setting recreational measures, the Council and Policy Board agreed to further evaluate potential indirect impacts to the commercial sector. This action will not consider any changes to commercial management and it will not consider transferring quota between the commercial and recreational sectors. The SSC review of several aspects of this management action considered this topic.¹

Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT) / Plan Development Team (PDT)

An FMAT/PDT has been formed to assist with development and analysis of potential alternatives. FMAT/PDT members are listed in the table below (continued on next page). Other Council, Commission, and NOAA Fisheries staff, as well as other experts, will be consulted as needed.

FMAT/PDT Member Name	Agency	Role/Expertise
Tracey Bauer	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Julia Beaty	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Chelsea Tuohy	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Mike Celestino	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Technical analysis and state management
Alexa Galvan	Virginia Marine Resources Commission	Technical analysis and state management
Carolyn Iwicki	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Scientific and technical analysis of federal fisheries management
Emily Keiley	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements

¹ The final report on the SSC review is available [here](#).

FMAT/PDT Member Name	Agency	Role/Expertise
Marianne Randall	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	National Environmental Policy Act requirements
Scott Steinback	Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Recreational fisheries economist
Rachel Sysak	New York Department of Environmental Conservation	Technical analysis and state management
Corinne Truesdale	Rhode Island Department of Fish and Wildlife	Technical analysis and state management
Sam Truesdell	Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Stock assessments
Sara Turner	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Scientific and technical analysis of federal fisheries management

Commissioner/Council Member Work Group

The Council and Policy Board established a small group of Commissioners and Council members to act as a liaison between the FMAT/PDT and the Policy Board. The purpose of the Work Group is to guide the FMAT/PDT on the intent of the Council and Policy Board, not to develop new options/alternatives. This group will periodically meet with the FMAT/PDT. Work Group members are listed below.

Work Group Member Name	Council Member or Commissioner
Skip Feller	Council member
Jason McNamee	Commissioner
Nichola Meserve	Commissioner
Adam Nowalsky	Commissioner
Paul Risi	Council member

Draft Timeline – Subject to change

May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT formed.
June - July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT meetings.
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps.• Council member/Commissioner work group formed.
September - November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT and Council member/Commissioner work group meeting.• AP meeting to review progress and provide input.• Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting to review progress.• MSE team begins work.
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps.
January - July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT and Council/Commissioner work group meetings to continue development and analysis of alternatives and develop draft document for public hearings.• Continued MSE work.• Formation and meetings of SSC sub-group to review several aspects of the framework/addenda.
July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final report on MSE work provided to FMAT/PDT and SSC.• SSC meeting to review draft sub-group report and finalize report from full SSC.
August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and consider modifications to the draft range of alternatives.
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT and Council/Commissioner work group meetings to develop recommendations for the final range of alternatives.
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Policy Board meeting to approve final range of alternatives and approve draft document for public hearings through Commission process.
November 2024 – February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public hearings through Commission process.
March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FMAT/PDT and AP meetings to review public comments and provide input to Council and Policy Board prior to final action.
April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council and Policy Board meeting for final action.
April-December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development, review, and revisions of framework/addenda documents.• Federal rulemaking.• Monitoring and Technical Committees use new process to set 2026 recreational measures.
Late 2025 or early 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective date of implemented changes.