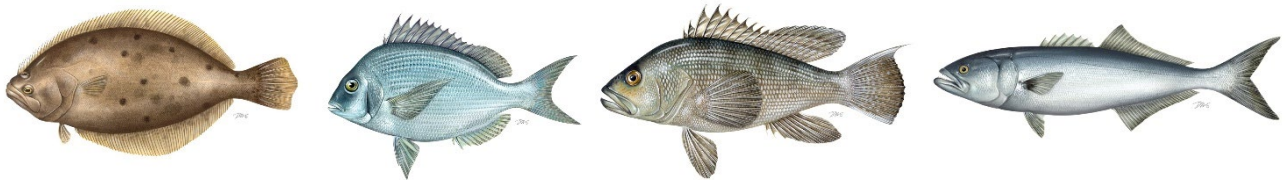


# Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

An Omnibus Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and  
Black Sea Bass and the Bluefish Fishery Management Plans

## DRAFT SCOPING SUMMARY

MARCH 2025



Prepared by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission



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## 1. Background and Comment Summary

### Scoping Overview

This document summarizes public scoping comments received on the proposed Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment. Through this action, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC or Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC or Commission) are considering options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from other recreational fishing modes (referred to as sector separation), as well as options related to the collection and use of recreational data, such as private angler reporting and enhanced for-hire vessel trip reporting (VTR) requirements. Additional information and the Public Information/Scoping Document are available at:

<https://www.mafmc.org/actions/recreational-sector-separation-and-data-collection-amendment>

Five public scoping hearings were held between February 25 and March 5, 2025. These hearings were a combination of virtual and hybrid meetings, and were attended by approximately 185 members of the public in total. Written comments were accepted from January 23 through March 20, 2025. A total of 124 written comments were received (Table 1).

Scoping comment totals are provided in the table below, followed by summaries of the scoping hearings (Section 2), and written comments sent by organizations and individuals (Section 3).

**Table 1:** Totals for written comments received and public attendees and commenters at scoping hearings.

<b>Written Public Comment Received</b>		
Organization Letters		16
Form Letters		15
Individual Comments		93
<b>Total Written Comment</b>		<b>124</b>
<b>Public Hearing</b>	<b>Number of Public Attendees*</b>	<b>Number of Commenters</b>
New Jersey (February 25, Webinar Hearing)	59	16
New York and Connecticut (February 26, Hybrid Hearing)	46	8
Rhode Island (February 27, Hybrid Hearing)	34	16
Delaware - North Carolina (March 4, Webinar Hearing)	10	5
Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts (March 5, Webinar Hearings)	36	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>53</b>

\*Some attended multiple hearings. Public attendees do not include state staff, federal Commission staff, Council staff, Commissioners/Proxies, or Council members.

## Public Comment Summary

The following tables provide an overview of the support for or opposition to considering the proposed issues in this amendment, as well as a summary of other prominent comment themes.

**Table 2:** Overview of the number of written and public hearing comments in support of or opposition to issues related to **recreational sector separation**.

	Written Comment			Public Hearing Comment	Total
	Individual	Organization	Form Letter		
Supports sector separation	25	7	15	31	78
Opposes sector separation	54	7	0	14	75
Supports mode management	8	7	15	18	48
Separate allocations preferred	2	3	0	8	13
Better data is needed before pursuing sector separation	2	4	0	7	13
Opposes separate allocations	1	1	0	0	2

**Table 3:** Overview of the number of written and public hearing comments in support of or opposition to issues related to **recreational data collection**.

	Written Comment			Public Hearing Comment	Total
	Individual	Organization	Form Letter		
Supports enhanced data collection and use (generally)	16	10	0	16	42
Supports enhanced for-hire data collection	3	2	0	6	11
Supports enhanced private angler reporting (generally)	12	8	0	10	30
Supports mandatory private angler reporting	5	2	0	6	13
Supports voluntary private angler reporting	5	3	0	3	11
Supports consideration of special access programs or other incentives for enhanced reporting	2	2	0	5	9
Supports consideration of alternative data sources/validation methods to improve recreational data accuracy	2	0	0	0	2
Data quality and/or use needs improvement	2	3	0	0	5



Supports required/uniform state-level VTR reporting	3	4	0	3	<b>10</b>
Supports required tournament reporting or other tournament data collection	1	2	0	0	<b>3</b>

**Table 4:** Overview of the number of written and public hearing comments in support of or opposition to issues related to **for-hire limited access or restrictions**.

	Written Comment			Public Hearing Comment	Total
	Individual	Organization	Form Letter		
Supports consideration of limited access of for-hire permits	6	0	15	6	<b>27</b>
Opposes limited access to for-hire permits, but supports cleaning up latent effort or other enhanced permit criteria	1	1	0	4	<b>6</b>
Opposes consideration of limitations to for-hire permits	2	1	0	5	<b>8</b>
Supports consideration of a limited ability to drop/reapply for for-hire permits	1	0	0	1	<b>2</b>

## 2. Scoping Hearing Summaries

A summary of each scoping hearing is provided below. Comments are summarized and paraphrased from hearing participants.

### New Jersey Hearing (Virtual)

Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

#### Attendees:

Public: Joseph Albanese, Louis Ariante, Carl Benson, Capt Kevin Bentley, Eleanor Bochenek, Mark Burnes, Luis Cadalzo, Joseph Christopher, Greg Cudnik, Lou DeFelice, Dennis DeMizio, John DePersenaire, David Decker, Aldo Del Console, Gregory DiDomenico, Chuck Dishian, Patrick Donnelly, James Fletcher, Rich Fiocco, Thomas Fote, Dean Foulks, John Fullmer, Steve Haasz, Paul Haertel, Jeremy Hancher, Jim Hutchinson, Laura Kull, Stephen Machalaba, Jill Maganza-Ruiz, Chris Mozitis, Karen Noe, Kenneth Ochse, Anthony Pensabene, Mathew Pacione, Paul Pieschl, Dave Rice, Buddy Seigel, Paul Shafer, Mickey Sherry, Philip Simon, Mike Skirka, Kenneth Snyder, Capt. Brett Taylor, Mark Taylor, John Toth, Darren Tremmel, Arnold Ulrich, Louis Van Bergen, Mike Waine, Kevin Wark, Joseph White, Steven Wilkes, Robert Woolley, Mike Yascko, Harvey Yenkinson, Rich Zola, Joseph Kayhart, David Riback, Patrick White

Commission, Council, Federal and State Staff: Chelsea Tuohy, Tracey Bauer, Kiley Dancy, Hannah Hart, Geoff White, Kurt Blanchard, Jeffery Brust, Michael Celestino, Heather Corbett, Laura Deighan, Elise Koob, Brendan Harrison, Savannah Lewis, Jose Montanez, Matt Rigdon, Craig Weedon, Toni Kerns, Jason Walsh, Michael Celestino, Heather Corbett, Craig Weedon

Commissioners/Proxies and Council Members: Chris Batsavage, Rick Bellavance, Joe Cimino, John Clark, Michelle Duval, Jeff Kaelin, Dan McKiernan, Greg Hueth

### Summary:

- Ten comments opposed sector separation. Of these ten comments, three stated they may support recreational sector separation after improvements have been made to recreational data collection.
- Three comments supported sector separation, with one comment specifically supporting mode-specific measures and opposing separate allocations.
- Two commenters noted that the objectives, problem statement, and potential benefits of exploring sector separation are not clearly defined in this document.
- Eight comments supported improving recreational data collection. Of these, one noted that he favored voluntary vs. mandatory reporting. Two commenters spoke in favor of exploring special access programs with enhanced reporting using striped bass as a model.
- One comment did not support limiting for-hire permits.

### Questions:

Participants asked about the Magnuson-Stevens Act's (MSA) requirements for the National Saltwater Angler Registry, with one participant questioning whether that registry exists and how it is used. Others had questions about how federal eVessel Trip Report (eVTR) data is used in conjunction with Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) data, or elsewhere in the management process. One commenter wondered who proposed this amendment, and what the primary motivations were to pursue it, particularly for sector separation. Commenters asked about sector separation approaches, including whether separate recreational Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) or sub-ACLs would be required, and whether for-hire inspected vessels (i.e., party boats) would be separated from non-inspected vessels (i.e., six-pack charter boats). One participant wondered why the Mid-Atlantic Council would have an influence on state waters management, including measures for shore mode. Two commenters asked about existing separation of bag limit measures in bluefish, including how it came to be, what data it was based on, and whether the performance of these separate measures had been evaluated.

### Comments:

- **Paul Haertel - Jersey Coast Anglers Association**
  - ***Opposed to sector separation.*** For example for bluefish, fishing for snapper bluefish is a gateway to the fishery for kids but now they can only bring home 3, whereas party boat anglers can bring home 5 large ones. This is unfair and confusing for anglers, creates difficulty for law enforcement, and creates in-fighting among the modes. Recognize that people in the for-hire fleet like it because they may have more liberal regulations and

they need to make a living, but managers need to also consider the impacts to tackle shops that support the private/shore fisheries. Sector separation could lead to more non-compliance.

- ***We support more accurate data collection.*** We will submit written comments later.
- **Phil Simon - New Jersey**
  - ***The average recreational fisherman is not in favor of sector separation.*** This seems like an initiative that came from the for-hire segment. I don't think anyone is trying to make things tougher for the party boats - I have my own boat and I also go out on the charter and party boats. We do need to find some measures that help them sustain their businesses. But the fear is that we're going to end up with one side gaining quota and one side losing quota and this will lead to additional problems. I agree with everything Paul said and I hope we can come up with a more logical way forward.
- **Tom Fote - Jersey Coast Anglers Association, Legislative Chairman; New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs**
  - I've been dealing with the idea of sector separation for 40 years and have participated in many discussions with New Jersey for-hire fleets. We have talked about how you would have to do this, and it seems like you would need to have separate ACLs to make this work. In that case you would need good data to support that split. For-hire fleets only account for a small proportion of harvest for each species. Once you've set up a separate quota, you pigeon hole the industry into that quota and limit flexibility to switch species. When you don't have separate quotas you can grow some years with no penalization, because you're not taking quota from one group and giving it to another. At least in the past the NJ for-hire fleet was not supportive for these reasons. The idea of separate quotas has also been used in the past to pit different recreational participants against each other, and we don't need more conflict in the community.
  - ***We need better data collection.*** In New Jersey, the saltwater registry is not very useful because there are so many exceptions, e.g., you don't need to get a permit for those under 16 or as a senior. Estimates of the number of anglers vary widely and we're not getting the full picture. When Dr. Boreman testified on MRIP years ago, he noted that it can't be done properly with the amount of money appropriated and the stagnant budget they'd had. Here we are in 2025 with that same budget.
  - ***Until we get better data, we should not pursue sector separation.*** Also, with sector separation you are penalizing folks that can't afford to go on a for-hire trip - this is environmental injustice. ***All recreational anglers regardless of mode should be held to the same standards and limits, and we need to work together.***
- **Stephen Machalaba - Middletown, New Jersey, Hi-Mar Striper Club**
  - ***We are opposed to sector separation.*** It will not add any benefit and will end up pitting one group against another. ***More focus needs to be put on improving data collection.*** Written comments to follow.
- **David Riback - New Jersey headboat and charter boat owner**

- Have been working on a headboat since high school and at 56 years old now has been a party boat owner for 15 years. I'm one of the four bluefish headboats left in the US. There used to be dozens of them from Long Island down to Cape May and now there are four left in the whole country.
- Sector separation of measures for bluefish has saved my business. They are such a small percentage of the catch, so for them to have an extra fish or two will keep historical businesses open and serve a community that does not have the ability to walk out of their shore house and cast a line every day. Party boats deal with people who struggle and want to catch fish for dinner. A family of four that comes down once a year should be able to take home a meal beyond one sea bass. ***Sector separation is a must for the for-hire sector.*** There has not been any issue with bluefish with law enforcement or anything. The best information managers are getting is from the for-hire sector.
- **James Fletcher - United National Fishermen's Association**
  - How are recreational fishermen identified if there is not a way for them to be registered? Using a state license as a saltwater license does not work. If someone above 65 bought a license, you don't know when they died or if they died or if they're still fishing. Before we get into sector separation, we need a real saltwater registry. Managers have danced around this. The Council's refusal to follow MSA's guidance on a saltwater registry is frustrating. We need better data from NOAA and the Council to improve management.
  - ***The UNFA opposes sector separation because it creates conflict among recreational fishermen.*** The current reporting system, which is not uniform, is detrimental to their interests. The best way to gather accurate data is by requiring every recreational fishing boat in the EEZ to use the Bluefin data app. Since 80% of recreational fishermen own private boats that return to private docks, there is no reliable reporting and no permitting requirements. It's impossible to gauge the number of recreational fishermen. Sector separation makes no sense without this data.
  - Sector separation also will do nothing to improve fish stock sizes. For the past 20 years, enhancement programs could have been implemented, but the Council has refused, despite MSA allowing it. By focusing on enhancing fish populations, we can ensure there are enough fish for both recreational and commercial fishermen, reducing conflict. Commercial fishing represents the interests of 300 million people who don't fish.
  - We support requiring all anglers to report via the Bluefin Data app, but before pursuing these initiatives, the Council should address the issue of dead discards in both sectors.
- **John Fullmer - New Jersey Council of Divers and Clubs**
  - ***We are opposed to Sector Separation and adamantly against separate allocations. Recreational fishermen should have the same rules.***
  - Better data is possible by asking for some reporting, provided that managers understand keeping it simple. ***We would favor voluntary reporting rather than mandatory reporting*** and you may get more accurate results with voluntary reporting.
- **Eleanor Bochenek**

- ***Sector Separation is something that may work in the future, but at this time it doesn't seem like something that can be done.*** Managers need to focus on improved data collection first.
- **Greg Cudnik - Fisherman's Headquarters Tackle Shop**
  - Some modernization needs to take place for recreational data collection; this is a massive issue.
  - ***Opposes the division of the recreational fishery by sector separation.*** This division would pit anglers against each other. However, this is a sensitive topic in my area because of the decline in the number of party/charter vessels and the concerns that this is a dying industry.
  - ***Sector separation should be looked at in the future after improving the data.*** When this occurs, we should take a close look at where to make the separation. I would lean toward for-hire boats having some kind of split, e.g., federally inspected vessels should have less strict regulations to help them with the business side of things. Support something to prevent a massive jump in the amount of charter vessels from weekend warriors looking to become 6-pack captains when it benefits them. This was a big problem during covid years.
- **John DePersenaire - Viking Marine Group**
  - Tonight's discussion highlights the ongoing management problems in recreational fisheries, which are not related to conservation but to poor management. There is a lack of clear problem definitions and goals. It's unclear what is broken or what success looks like, and without that clarity, progress is impossible. MRIP data shows that the percentage of harvest from party boats and shore has decreased over time private boat harvest has increased, but it's unclear if we're aiming to restore past percentages.
  - The loss of infrastructure and workforce is a real problem. Current regulations fail to accommodate business needs, impacting operational flexibility and employee retention. This problem should be more clearly articulated. Whose problem are we trying to fix - the angler? Or the owner operator? I recommend the Council and Commission work with a social scientist or economist to define the issues and set measurable success criteria for both groups.
  - For Issue 1 (sector separation), we support giving vessel owners more flexibility in running their businesses. We view these boats as essential infrastructure. For many anglers, for-hire boats offer their first exposure to fishing for lifelong anglers. At Viking, we're in the business of designing, outfitting, servicing, and maintaining fishing boats. These fleets are a critical part of our community.
  - ***We are interested in exploring mode-specific regulations—different rules for different modes.*** We are interested in discussing it more but we have to be careful about the loopholes it can open up. We have existing challenges with this for bluefin tuna and striped bass in some states and don't want to go down that path.
  - ***We oppose creating a sub-allocation within the recreational sector*** because there are not enough fish in the overall harvest limit to support that. This is a non-starter unless it leads to revisiting the allocation between the recreational and commercial sectors. I

think we can have discussions of sector separation without going down the path of an amendment, as it seems unnecessary.

- For Issue 2 (data collection), we all know and acknowledge the limitations of recreational data collection. These are large scale open access and very diverse fisheries and it seems like we are chasing something we're never going to get to. MRIP was never designed for real time monitoring or to be used on a fine scale and was never designed for quota monitoring. The issue is not the programs themselves but how management is using them. Instead of pursuing an unattainable "gold standard" in data collection which we will never have enough money for, we should focus on improving management with the resources available.

- **Rich Fiocco**

- ***Opposes sector separation***, believing it creates unnecessary controversy among anglers.
- ***Supports additional data collection efforts, either voluntary or mandatory.*** A voluntary program should have been tried a few years ago to assess its effectiveness. The Striped Bass bonus tag program has done a great deal to provide valuable additional information to managers that has improved decision making. A similar approach could be taken for these species, perhaps allowing one short fish or something along those lines, where fishermen must provide data to receive the bonus tag.

- **Luis Cadalzo**

- Earlier, it was mentioned that sector separation could benefit both the for-hire and private sectors, but based on the comments and my own thoughts, it seems this is mainly aimed at benefiting the for-hire sector, to the detriment of the private sector. Is that the case? If we don't know or there aren't any clear benefits, why are we pursuing this?
- ***Regarding data collection, the striped bass program is excellent. It offers a small reward for anglers who log their trips and catches, which is enough for most people.***

- **Jeremy Hancher - Philadelphia, Surf fisherman**

- ***I'm 100% behind sector separation.*** I predominantly fish in New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina. I don't want to be held to the same standard as the party/charter sector. Talking to other fellow shore-based anglers, I think this is an excellent opportunity to explore the possibilities and thoroughly discuss the issues such as getting the necessary data. I will submit formal comments but wanted to be one of the few voices to say exploring this is definitely warranted. I think there are perceived benefits at least for shore-based anglers.

- **Louis Ariante - Brielle, New Jersey**

- ***I do not support sector separation*** but I think the fish enforcement idea is wonderful and it should be pursued as much as possible.

- **Carl Benson**



- Fisheries management has limited resources. There should only be one priority and that is to rebuild the stock. I'm a commercial and recreational hook and line fisherman, only for summer flounder. I have been waiting a long, long time for the rebuilding of that stock. Managers' attention should be solely focused on this issue.
- **Chris Mozitis**
  - I understand the importance of collecting good data, but I don't understand the sector separation. ***The for-hire industry makes up such a small component of the fishery and I see sector separation as being divisive.*** It's not going to give a lot more data due to the small and shrinking percentage of the fishery. Many of my customers are vacationers that don't even keep the fish.
  - The discussion of potentially limiting permits was alarming - I don't see how this would support data collection and ***I'm not supportive of limiting for-hire permits.***
  - I agree that the bonus tag for stripers provides a model for additional data collection and would probably be good to apply to the species here. Could see the benefit of reporting through a phone app. Written comments to follow.

## **Connecticut and New York Hearing (Hybrid)**

Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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*Hybrid Hearing: Attendance includes both virtual and in-person attendees*

### **Attendees:**

Public: Rob Aaronson, Gerry Beers, Captain Kevin Bently, Marc Berger, Jim Brewer, Leo Chomen, Tom Clapsadle, Lou DeFelice, Mark DeJong, Gregory DiDomenico, Michael Dion, Greg Dubrulle, Roman Dudus, Bob Fiske, Tom Fuda, Daniel Giunta, Stephanie Griffith, Ken Holmes, TJ Krabowski, Jill Maganza-Ruiz, Seth Megargle, Jerry Morgan, Kirari Nabetani, Douglas Parker, Michael Pirri, Brad Ries, Richard Roy, Matthew Thomas, Darren Tremmel, Mike Waine, Kate Wilke, Joseph Beneventine, Anthony Notaro, Richard Jensen, Patrick Gillen, Mike Bady, Ken Hejducek, Genny Eccleston, Jeff W., Peter Wagenhauser, Captain Phil Kess, Carl Lobue, Steve Ruiz, Dave Prilook, Anthony Quaresimo, Sharon Quaresimo

Commission, Council, Federal, and State Staff: Chelsea Tuohy, Tracey Bauer, Kiley Dancy, Caitlin Craig, Maureen Davidson, Julie DeFilippi Simpson, Laura Deighan, Hayden Dubniczki, Corrin Flora, Toni Kerns, Savannah Lewis, Matthew Rigdon, Rachel Sysak, Nicholas Velseboer, Geoffrey White, Jose Montanez, Samantha Rosen

Commissioners/Proxies and Council Members: Rick Bellavance, Jim Gilmore, Scott Curatolo-Wagemann, Michelle Duval, Marty Gary, Matthew Gates, Jesse Hornstein, John Maniscalco, Nichola Meserve, Adam Nowalsky, Greg Hueth

## Summary:

- Six comments were in favor of sector separation with mode management, but opposed to separate allocations for the private and for-hire modes.
- One comment was in favor of limiting state and federal for-hire permits and two comments were opposed to further restrictions on for-hire permits.
- Two comments were in favor of some form of private angler reporting.

## Questions:

There was confusion among participants about the difference between mode management (i.e., separate management measures for each mode of the recreational fishery) and sector separation. Specifically, participants considered sector separation to include separate allocations and mode management as a separate issue not under the umbrella of sector separation. Participants expressed hesitation about commenting on the “sector separation” portion of the web comment form due to the general lack of support for separate allocations and support for mode management. Participants were worried that filling in this portion of the form would be counted as a comment supporting separate allocations. One participant asked if there has been any analysis to date comparing Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates by mode to for-hire reported catch. Questions were also asked regarding how the for-hire VTR data is currently used in management. Finally, participants raised questions about the ability to obtain a New York State party and charter license and license caps. Staff clarified that in New York, there is a cap on the six-pack license.

## Comments:

- **Patrick Gillan - New York, owns and operates an inspected party/charter boat**
  - *In favor of sector separation, specifically management by separate measures, not separate allocations.*
  - *In favor of controls on federal and state permits.* Regarding counting fish, we (the for-hire industry) have to submit VTRs before passengers disembark the vessel.
- **James Sneider - Huntington, New York, James Joseph Fishing**
  - *I am in favor of sector separation without the allocation* mostly because we don't trust the data that is available to us right now. Currently, it is \$800 for a gallon of all grip paint. The miniscule amount of fish that we are allowed is not keeping up with what our expenses are and you can tell that by the dwindling amount of people. The fleet is dwindling to a handful of boats compared to what was around 20 years ago. There is a decent number of part-time six pack charters. What we face is the potential elimination of the for-hire sector. What we need immediately is something to fish for otherwise we face extinction. There are also no young people getting into the business anymore.
  - I understand that Paul (Risi) has put a lot of work into this and a lot of thought and his help is always appreciated, but if you need to be shocked into reality come down to the shipyard and stare at the shipyard bills. Our costs usually go into maintenance for updated equipment and safety of our vessels. We are being robbed of updating our



vessels and safety equipment, and the people responsible are the people that make the laws and write these plans.

- **Carl Lobue - New York**

- There may be consideration of changes in how reporting happens either on the for-hire sector or the recreational sector and I just want to request if that moves forward that there be an evaluation of the existing mandatory reporting for recreational fisheries that we have already in this region like bluefin tuna and tilefish to see what is working and what is not and why. Also, there has been some recent publications on the different apps in the voluntary space and I would like to make sure that this is included in the evaluation so all of that information is available when this is ultimately discussed.

- **Mark DeJong - New York, full-time for-hire captain:**

- ***In favor of separation by mode management, not separate allocations.*** We do not trust what we would get thrown at us that way.
- ***Regarding data collection, I would love mandatory recreational reporting,*** but I think we all know that is never going to happen. ***Voluntary reporting would also be wonderful,*** but a vast majority won't do it. We do have to improve the data.

- **Jill Maganza-Ruiz - Montauk, New York, owner of November Rain Charters, member of Montauk Boatmen and Captains Association:**

- ***We are in favor of sector separation with mode management, we are not supportive of any kind of allocation or quota.*** I do not intend to imply that for-hire captains are better than recreational anglers, but there is a completely different and much more stringent standard that is set for for-hire captains than for recreational anglers. There is the licensing piece, but we are also required to uphold certain safety standard, we are required to do random drug testing, we have to purchase higher levels of insurance, for inspected vessels we undergo annual inspections and the associated costs, additional equipment that is needed on the boat. For-hire captains are purchasing federal and state permits and depending on how many states you are fishing in you are talking over \$1,000 if not more just for basic in-shore fishing. We are required to submit VTRs where the private angler currently is not required to do that. We make these investments in time and money because it is part of operating our business, but these requirements that we face as a result of operating these businesses extend far beyond what recreational anglers are required to do in order to get on a boat and go fishing for the day.
- It is clear that we (for-hire captains) have already been defined as a different animal. Separately, for striped bass, there have been conversations about mode management, there already is an existing mode split for bluefish, so clearly there is recognition that there is a difference between the for-hire fishing fleet and the recreational anglers. It does leave me a bit baffled as to why these measures don't extend further to other species.
- ***In terms of reporting, we are in favor of private angler reporting.*** We say that fully recognizing that it does not happen with the flip of a switch and there is additional

resources and money that is required. When we talk about the different standards that the for-hire fleet is held to, some of that should be extended to the recreational anglers. There should be some way of capturing what private anglers are doing on their boats when they are out fishing just the way we are required to.

- **Anthony Quaresimo - Montauk, NY, Miss Montauk:**
  - ***There was talk about putting a cap on the charter or party boat licenses. I would prefer not seeing a cap*** as a younger guy in the industry and not having a license. I think it would be better if we made it less convenient for any other boat to get a charter license so easily if it were beneficial for them to fish with. Something like a proof of charter boat insurance and I am sure there are other things that other states are doing now where you have to prove that you are a charter or party boat to get that license.
- **Richard Jensen - Orient Point, New York, Nancy Ann Charters and North Fork Captains Association:**
  - ***In favor of mode management.*** We work very closely with the Montauk Captains Association and I concur and agree with everything Jill said.
  - ***I don't think VTRs can get any more enhanced than they are.*** The VTRs are very thorough, the data is there.
  - I don't believe there is anyone in the for-hire business that wants to wait two years for this to go on. The whole industry is struggling and we have been talking about this for years. We need the help now, not in two years.
- **Captain Kevin Bently - New London, Connecticut, Reelin Sportfishing Charters, member of Connecticut Charter and Party Boat Association:**
  - ***Supports Jill and Richard's comments, supports mode management.***
  - ***I don't think we should limit the number of party and charter licenses.*** This is a dying industry, and we need some young blood in this.
  - I want to be able to give my customers a few more fish so they can bring a meal home. You have people spending a lot of money a day for a charter, and I feel really sad when I can't send them home with a meal for a family.

## Rhode Island Hearing (Hybrid)

Thursday, February 27, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

*Hybrid Hearing: Attendance includes both virtual and in-person attendees*

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### Attendees:

Public: Richard Reich, Scott Travers, Rich Hittinger, Richard Chatowsky, David McCormick, Jeff P., Dennis Dubee, Sean Miele, Frank Blount, Peter Randall, Russell Blank, Charlie Julian, Jack Moore, Dave Monti, Chris Herz, Kelly Smith, Marc Berger, Kate Wilke, Andrew Dangelo, Dawn Wood, Jeff Moore, Mark Terceiro, Steven Wilkes, Darren Tremmel, Richard Pruell, Mike Waine, Mark Taylor, Michael Pirri, Jasper Coutu, Andrew Dangelo, Theodore Toppses, Michael O'Grady, Laurel Naylor, John Lee

Commission, Council, Federal and State Staff: Chelsea Tuohy, Tracey Bauer, Kiley Dancy, Hannah Hart, Nicole Lengyel Costa, John Lake, Corinne Truesdale, Travis Ford, Matt Rigdon, Savannah Lewis, Laura Deighan, Daniel Costa

Commissioners/Proxies and Council Members: Adam Nowalsky, Raymond Kane, Jason McNamee, Daniel McKiernan, Greg Hueth, Skip Feller

### Summary:

- Two commenters were opposed to sector separation, however, both noted that if it is pursued, it should be done with separate allocations.
- Thirteen participants spoke in favor of sector separation. Of those who spoke to specific methods, 6 supported separate management measures only at this time, while one supported separate allocations.
- Three commenters noted that separate allocations would be better explored in the future once data has been improved.
- Six commenters spoke to supporting enhanced recreational reporting/data collection generally. Three mentioned better for-hire data collection, and four mentioned enhanced private angler accountability.
- Two participants noted support for consideration of for-hire permit restrictions/limitations. Two other attendees did not support consideration of true limited access, but supported exploration of approaches like an apprenticeship requirement.

### Questions:

At the Rhode Island hearing, participants asked whether it was common for other states to have separate state-level measures for for-hire vs. private anglers, and also wondered whether other states had similar data collection methodologies as Rhode Island. Participants also asked how additional data collected from the for-hire sector, primarily via VTRs, is being used. One participant asked whether the Council and Board had determined yet whether sector separation would be applied with the same approach for all four species, or whether it would be considered by species. Another commenter asked for clarification on how sector separation might influence each sector's measures, specifically if separation is based on history, if each sector would start out with essentially the regulations they have

now. Finally, participants and staff discussed the different sector separation approaches after a question about separate quotas vs. separate measures only (referred to by some as “mode management”).

#### Comments:

- **Rich Hittinger - Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association**

- Historically, ***RISAA has been opposed to sector separation***, believing that everyone should be fishing under the same rules, regardless of type of recreational boat or angler. To have different rules depending on whether you paid for the boat or not seems wrong and preferential. Estimation of harvest may become more difficult because MRIP has its problems and the private sector is going to be a much larger sector in terms of landings, so if there's greater error in that large fraction, the total recreational catch estimates will be less accurate.
- We understand there are different regulations already for some components of the fisheries. ***If going further toward sector separation, would support separate allocations so that each component of the recreational fishery is responsible for their portion of the catch allocation.***
- ***RISAA has long been in support of electronic data collection*** and have worked with Harbor Light toward making that happen. We think that there's a place for that in the private recreational sector if we can get more people to use that type of system, and use that data. This is not an easy thing; we've been trying to do it for years. We started with angler catch four years ago. The platform works, but the data isn't being used for anything at this point.

- **Rich Chatowsky - Drifter Charters**

- This has been a longstanding issue about how the pie is split between for-hire, other recreational, and commercial participants. I have been in my business for close to 40 years and my dad did it before me. Even though I love what I do I cannot see myself as the same as a private recreational angler and I don't think we should be in that category. ***I support the separation.*** While it's a fine line, there are a lot of things that make the sectors different, such as license requirements. The charter boat industry likely does not have anything left in it to take another hit if something else is going to be taken away. So much has been cut from our businesses and if it keeps going the way it's going it's not clear how these businesses will continue to operate.
- This is my full-time job and how I make my living. I am not the same guy who fishes from shore and I don't believe I should be in the same category as a private fisherman - we are in this as a business. It would be a tough sell to the customers to tell them we are getting cuts again. The amount of charter catch taken barely shows up on the graphs. Supports sector separation for for-hire vessels to better control their own destinies.
- There are very few new people coming into this business. It's a great living but the regulations make it so that there is very little incentive to invest in new entry to the fishery. ***If the for-hire sector were to have their own limits I think there is a door open for our future.***

- While recreational anglers fishing from a charter boat are considered recreational, there seems to be some misunderstanding - most of my clients are new anglers who don't own boats, don't want to own a boat or equipment, and hire me for a day trip. While recreational anglers who own boats are one group, there's a distinct group of people who rely on for-hire services.
  - ***Sector separation is a step towards a better future for the for-hire sector.*** If the regulations get tougher, we are out of a job. Private recreational anglers are making individual choices about whether to fish, what to buy, etc., but for-hire operators are in this for a different reason.
  - While I have no problem with recreational anglers, it seems like there is a problem with for-hire for some reason. The charter fleet catches significantly less than the private recreational sector, and we need better acknowledgment of the impact for-hire operations have on the resource.
- **Gib Randall - Charter Boat C-Devil II**
    - ***I support the separation.*** It's important to remember that those of us in the for-hire fleet represent thousands of customers. As for-hire fishermen, we have the best interests of the health of the fishery in mind. Some of the best managed fisheries in the world are managed by the fishermen themselves, and I have additional comments that I will submit in writing.
    - Many of the old timers in this fishery have been doing this for decades - they live and breathe this industry. They have a deep understanding of the fishery and many know it better than the scientists and regulators. I don't think there's a single for-hire person who would support this if they didn't truly think it was the right move for the fishery. I'm new to the businesses, but the more experienced for-hire captains have a profound understanding of the fishery and a unique perspective. This is their life, so if they did not think that the fishery could handle it I don't think anyone would be supporting it.
- **Russel Blank - Striker Charters**
    - ***I believe in sector separation.*** There is already a separation between recreational and commercial, and we're not trying to take any more from the recreational sector, we're just trying to get our own allotment to keep our heads above the water. Year after year, size limits go up and bag limits decrease, making it harder for us to operate. Across the board there should be a more level playing field. It's harder and harder to take people out and have them take home a meal. It's time for us to pursue sector separation. A lot of us have been in this business for a long time, and we're watching our ability to catch fish dwindle until we can't catch fish anymore.
- **Sean Miele - Charter Boat Finally**
    - ***I agree with sector separation.*** We are able to take people out fishing that don't have the means to take themselves, and our license covers them so they don't have to purchase one. We care deeply about the fisheries because our livelihood depends on them. When customers have a tough day on the water, it affects us too, and it's getting more difficult for people to take fish home.

- **Charlie Julian - Great Run Charters**
  - ***I support mode management, for many of the same reasons Richard C mentioned,*** especially that it helps ensure the viability of our business. Having our own rules and regulations will help keep us in business and may attract new people. Many of us will need replacing at some point, which is looking difficult right now. So it's important to incentivize new investments, and ***mode management could provide that incentive.***
- **Scott Travers - RISAA**
  - ***We would prefer to keep things as they are.*** A recreational angler fishing from the shore or his own boat is also a recreational angler if he's fishing from a charter boat. We're all here because we want the best for the fishery. ***So, if mode management is what is best for the fishery, that's fine. But in all fairness if that is pursued, I would advocate for a separate allocation as well.***
  - Although I'm not in the for-hire business, I respect them. They provide valuable information for us private recreational guys to look up to and we look forward to fishing with them to become better anglers. The less experienced guys that go out on the charter will have success when they go with experienced charter captains but will probably have less success on their own. ***I don't see how sector separation will be beneficial, because perhaps the for-hire fleet does have a better success rate.***
- **Paul Johnson - Carol J Charters**
  - I chartered briefly from 1972-1978 out of Stone Harbor, and the regulations are vastly different than they were back then. We saw more fish then than we do now. More restrictive regulations, while helping the fish stocks, have provided a lot of little setbacks for the for-hire industry. The amount of fish that I throw back is far more than the amount of fish I take. While we can't control the weather and on-the-water conditions, ***sector separation would provide some additional control and influence over daily operations by having a separate amount of fish to target.*** It's a step in the right direction, and I'll have more comments later.
- **Frank Blount - Francis Fleet**
  - Having worked on both sides of the table, this is not an easy issue. Mode management is often described as a better deal for the for-hire fleet, but doesn't always necessarily work out that way. For example in RI, I wish sea bass were open in May for the for-hire fleet [as it is for the private sector in RI], and I don't know if I will have anything to fish for at that time.
  - ***I'm in favor of mode management (separate measures) but not separate allocations at this time*** because I don't think the data is there to support it. I believe for-hire MRIP data is underestimated, and we see that the private recreational data fluctuates significantly with big spikes and dips. If this goes forward I would hope that multi-year averages would be used to account for this variation, but I don't think we're quite there yet with the data to support separate allocations especially for the private mode.



- If mode management/sector separation moves forward, there should be better accountability on the for-hire side if we want to be able to take advantage of a system like this. I'd advocate for better reporting practices and mandatory AIS or VMS systems. AIS is basically just the cost of the unit, and could help verify when vessels need to be submitting trip reports. Vessels could also have the choice of using VMS instead of AIS, because it's private. This would allow for-hire vessels to take advantage of the benefits of for-hire separation without allowing people to jump back and forth between modes based on what is more favorable at the time. This approach would make it more serious and more verifiable. For example, right now there is a fishery for cod east of the Cape, but the data indicates no one is fishing there. There needs to be accountability.
- ***I support better private reporting.*** My concern is if it's not mandatory, the people who are going to report are probably going to be the better fishermen. While that data may be very accurate, it may not be representative of the activity of other anglers. However private reporting would be very logistically challenging and data intensive, and it's unclear the best way to do this, especially with staff and funding cuts.
- The mode split seems to be working for basically all four of the species. ***However, I am against mode splits that allow anglers to easily take advantage of varying state limits when it suits them.*** It is not right when anglers go to another state to take advantage of a higher bag limit or when their own season closes, when it is disadvantageous to others.
- **Dave Monti - Charter Captain, Warwick, RI**
  - Not speaking on behalf of these organizations, but member of RI Saltwater Anglers Association, RI Party & Charter Boat Association, founding member of American Saltwater Guides Association, former RI Marine Fisheries Council chair.
  - Sector separation could be explored for the recreational community, provided it's based on solid science that benefits both fish and fisheries. Managing with the best available science has contributed to the rebuilding of some stocks. ***Managing the for-hire sector with separate catch limits, informed by good data, would offer enhanced flexibility and control for the for-hire sector.*** It would offer higher potential of catch and tailored regulations by mode. For-hire operators are running a business and are vastly different from anglers fishing from shore or on a boat once or twice a year.
  - ***Separate allocations with separate accountability measures would be important to make each sector accountable for their harvest each year.***
  - ***It's also appropriate to consider limits on the ability to temporarily drop and reapply for for-hire permits,*** provided it's done in a way that does not exclude people from getting into the fishery all together. It's a privilege to be able to hold a for-hire license and a noble career to be able to take people fishing that otherwise would not be able to. Sector separation would be beneficial for the for-hire sector to continue this tradition, as well as to the private sector as we better learn how to account for their catch.
  - For-hire reporting is essential. I've been reporting catch for 13 years and pioneering the concept of electronic reporting. I spearheaded a committee of private anglers with the RISAA to develop an application, AnglerCatch, developed by Harbor Light. I believe this

software is ACCSP vetted. Through work with the American Saltwater Guides Association, I have helped develop a very intuitive app, GotOne.

- Managers need additional data, and ***should work to develop standards for data gathered from different apps***; this has not been done. Managers should be able to accept data from a number of apps as long as it meets the standards.
- For-hire vessels should be reporting at both the state and federal levels.
- ***We should experiment with mandatory private angler reporting, and also with educating anglers on how and why to report.***

- **Marc Berger - Connecticut, Lucky Strike Charters**

- ***I strongly support sector separation through mode management (separate measures without separate quotas).*** The for-hire industry accounts for less than 10% of total catch, and we need consistent regulations for viability. This sector provides fishery access to underprivileged people and supports businesses who rely on us for additional funds. ***I'm not in favor of total limited access, but there is a need to clean up latent permits and find a way to verify legitimate for-hire businesses.***

- **Michael Pirri**

- ***I agree with Marc Berger's points on mode management.*** There are plenty of fish out there, and for-hire services should be privileged to more of those fish. Many for-hire customers get one trip a year and we need to be able to give them the most we can for their money. We are a small portion of the catch, and mode management would stabilize multi-year regulations. We need consistency to ensure that businesses can operate without customers being turned away due to species closures. This is the only business in the world that you have to dissuade people from booking your services. With all of the issues with striped bass, mode management could allow greater access to abundant species like black sea bass which would take pressure off of striped bass as well.
- ***I support looking into limiting access in the for-hire fishery, perhaps through an apprenticeship model similar to what is done in Maine for the lobster industry.*** It is currently too easy to call yourself a charter boat and people may take advantage of that under sector separation.

- **Andrew Dangelo - captain and owner, Maridee Charters**

- The for-hire industry is being regulated out of business and we need to do something about that. The for-hire fleet does not account for much of the catch when compared to the private mode. We need better accountability for private recreational anglers. ***I support mode management/sector separation.***

- **Jasper Coutu - Point Judith, Rhode Island, charter boat captain, Vice President of Rhode Island Charter Boat Association**

- ***I fully support sector separation.*** For-hire operations are completely different from private recreational fishing. We need different courses, different licenses, and we are required to report every catch. We make up a fraction of the recreational fishery.



- I'm one of the youngest participants in the charter fleet. A few years ago it seemed like a good opportunity, now I think it's one of the worst businesses to get into, which is a shame to have to say.
  - ***Separating the for-hire sector from private anglers will allow more tailored regulations and improved data accuracy.*** That data will promote fishery sustainability, and help the industry grow. For-hire trips have seen massive decreases in RI due to overregulation, but recreational catch overall is increasing. Sector separation would show which aspects of the fishery are contributing to that and show that we are a fraction of the increase in mortality on striped bass, for example, and potentially reverse that trend.
  - ***I was initially opposed to limited access for for-hire vessels, however, I like the idea mentioned earlier of establishing an apprenticeship requirement.***
  - I have concerns with the accuracy of the recreational catch data, and believe that separation will improve accuracy of the data overall.
  - It needs to be a priority for the Council and the Commission to rebuild the charter fleet as a whole. These businesses are hurting and need a rebuild to help folks continue to make a living. For-hire customers don't want to buy boats and gear, they just want to have the experience with their kids without committing a ton of time and money. Our businesses provide the opportunities for certain members of society to go out and fish. For that reason we're completely different.
  - ***Separate allocations should be considered in the future, but I don't think we're ready for that at this stage.*** The data that gets separated will show that the sectors should be allocated separately and serve as the basis for future decisions on this.
- **Kelly Smith (via chat)**
    - ***I'm in favor of sector separation,*** as hopefully with time it could allow charter boats to have their own limits. We take a minimal portion of the resource compared to other recreational anglers, and this is the only way for the charter industry to survive given the increasing regulations.
  - **Richard Reich - RISAA**
    - The AnglerCatch app was mentioned earlier, which I have used, but we've found that the data is not being used currently. Everyone has a cellphone in their pocket. I fish quite a bit recreationally and have never had to do a survey when I come into the marina. ***We need a platform to improve recreational data.***

## **Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, and North Carolina Hearing (Virtual)**

Tuesday, March 4, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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### **Attendees:**

Public: Morgan Krell, Charles Laurens, Alex Perez, Javier Pujols, Lenny Rudow, Buddy Seigel, Daniel Smith, Darren Tremmel, Mike Waine, Susanna Musick

Commission, Council, Federal and State Staff: Chelsea Tuohy, Tracey Bauer, Kiley Dancy, Hannah Hart, Kurt Blanchard, Julie DeFilippi Simpson, Laura Deighan, Craig Weedon, Geoffrey White, Angel Willey, Mary Sabo, José Montañez, Sarah Cvach, Daniel Herrick, Tammy O'Connell, Matt Rigdon, Beth Versak, Travis Ford, Alexa Galvan

Commissioners/Proxies and Council Members: Michael Luisi, Chris Batsavage, Pat Geer, Ronald Owens, Anna Beckwith, Adam Nowalsky, Nichola Meserve, Roy Miller, Michelle Duval, Joseph Grist, Wes Townsend, David Sikorski

### **Summary:**

- Two comments opposed all types of sector separation.
- Three comments supported sector separation, two of which specifically supported separate allocations for the private/shore and for-hire sectors.
- Three comments supported changes to improve private/shore sector reporting, two of which supported development of mandatory reporting requirements.
- Two comments supported some form of limiting for-hire permits.

### **Questions:**

At this hearing, several members of the public requested clarification from the FMAT/PDT and the Council and Policy Board on specific points, if the Council and Policy Board choose to move forward with the related issues. First, one member of the public wanted to know if cost estimates will be developed if the Council and Policy Board wish to continue to consider changes to recreational reporting requirements. It was noted that the Council and Policy Board may direct the FMAT/PDT to look into cost estimates, if recreational reporting requirements continue to be pursued in this management action, but it would be an intensive process and would require consultation with Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and other applicable organizations. Another member of the public was interested in what types of catch data would be analyzed. It was noted that this will be determined later in the process by the FMAT/PDT, but if any member of the public knows of a specific dataset they would like to see considered, they will be able to suggest it.

## Comments:

- **Lenny Rudow**

- ***I think sector separation would create friction between the recreational and the for-hire community.*** I understand that the for-hire sector is trying to make a living, but where are these fish going to come from? We all know the for-hire fishermen are going to get a bigger limit if sector separation is implemented. Is that all going to come out of the recreational sector? For-hire does straddle between recreational and commercial. I think the for-hire sector's harvest limit, if it got one, should be half from recreational and half from commercial.
- ***I think mandatory reporting for the recreational sector should happen.*** I was on a committee about mandatory reporting with the state of Maryland. We unanimously agreed it should happen. I understand there is a cost involved. However, you should look at it as an investment and it should definitely be followed up on. Look at all the money spent on MRIP, and look at what we got from that.
- ***I am concerned sector separation could potentially trigger a shift in angler effort.*** If for-hire gets a higher catch limit and/or a lower size limit, how would that affect the actions of the angling community? Are people going to shift to that sector to take home more fish? How will this impact the catch rates?

- **Alex Perez - Virginia**

- ***I don't believe in sector separation*** since some for-hire captains can take multiple trips per day. I'm not sure how that will skew the numbers.

- **Charles Laurens - Virginia, Rudee Tours**

- ***I'm in favor of sector separation.*** The for-hire sector gets lumped in with private recreational fishermen. There's a lot of flaws in MRIP, but we submit VTRs. The VTRs make it very clear what we catch, and I would like that data to be used. We take a hit with the recreational data that's collected. I would like to see our VTRs used in a better way to reflect what we're catching. I want the VTR data to be used for our limits. The for-hire sector doesn't want to be affected by whether private boats go over on ACL and then have to have us have restricted limits.
- I really don't understand if the for-hire sector would benefit from summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass implementing a mode split like bluefish. ***I think separate allocations for the for-hire and private recreational sectors would be better than implementing mode splits.***
- I think Florida sets limits on ability to retain for-hire permits. It could be a way to limit higher catch amongst the 6 pack for-hire especially. There are not many headboats in Virginia so that doesn't really affect us. ***But if data showed the for-hire sector was catching too much, I don't think we'd be opposed to limiting permits for 6 packs.***
- ***I think mandatory recreational reporting is fair.*** I run hundreds of trips per year. We should have better regulations because of our better data. MRIP estimates are probably overestimated, so if everyone reported we'd be better off.

- **Daniel Smith - Virginia**

- I work with Charles at Rudee Tours and I would like to piggyback on that and say I am in favor of what Charles said.

- **Morgan Krell - Delaware**

- ***I am supportive of sector separation***, but am unsure which option I am most supportive of. If catch limits are adjusted/split, I would like to see the for-hire included in that.
- I would like to see the catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) data on the for-hire vs. private recreational sectors. I imagine the CPUEs between the two sectors would be very different. This is important to understand.
- Good data are being collected from the for-hire sector. ***If we are collecting for-hire data, we should use it.***
- ***I would like to see private recreational data collected.*** It feels like everyone thinks the current data are poor. I would like to see that improved. If private recreational reporting is required for both shore and boat modes, I am concerned we wouldn't get accurate data from the shore mode. I am unsure of where private/shore charters would fit in the current scoping options.

## **Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine Hearing (Virtual)**

Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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### **Attendees:**

Public: Howard Bogan, Keith Baker, Rick Bellavance, Frank Bount, Rymond Bogan, Paul Caruso, Grace Casselberry, Caleb Cebula, Jack Creighton, Brian Curry, Michael DeAnzerix, Richard Dickinson, Kurt Doherty, Jim Geilfuss, Bethany Gibbons, Willy Hatch, Elmer Jeronimo, Tobias Lacey, Joseph Leclair, Adam Lucas, Mark Mahoney, Henry Marcucella, Vincent McCarthy, Brett Mills, Bradlie Morgan, Eric Morrow, Barbara Nelson, Eric Nelson, Michael Pierdinock, Paul Quintal, John Ramirez, Jared Tausig, Darren Tremmel, Mike Waine, Svatava Whiltton, Doug Brown

Commission, Council, Federal and State Staff: Chelsea Tuohy, Tracey Bauer, Kiley Dancy, Hannah Hart, Matt Ayer, Peter Clarke, Laura Deighan, Steven Ellis, Corrin Flora, Toni Kerns, Savannah Lewis, David Martins, Matt Rigdon, Sefatia Romeo Theken, Kristen Thiebault, Geoff White, Daniel Herrick, Kurt Blanchard

Commissioners/Proxies and Council Members: Chris Batsavage, Greg Hueth, Raymond Kane, Nichola Meserve, Adam Nowalsky, Renee Zobell, Daniel McKiernan

### **Summary:**

- Five comments supported sector separation specifically via mode management
- Six comments supported changes to improve private/shore sector reporting, two of which supported development of mandatory reporting requirements.
- Four comments opposed limiting for-hire permits.

## Questions:

During the meeting, participants sought clarification on the timeline, with discussion noting that a full amendment process would take about two years depending on the final scope. Questions were also raised about the variability of for-hire reporting requirements among states, with some requiring reporting for state permit holders while others, like Massachusetts, do not. Several attendees inquired about mode specific regulations (or mode management), asking for clarification on its potential implementation for these species, citing examples from fisheries like bluefish, blueline tilefish and bluefin tuna, where different bag limits exist for various for-hire and private modes. While mode management has been applied on a case-by-case basis, a more formalized approach could be pursued through this process.

Other key topics included the potential to review management approaches from other jurisdictions to inform future decisions, and questioned whether any plans exist that require states to limit new permit issuances. Lastly, concerns were raised about the reliability of Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) in the for-hire sector, particularly the challenges of ensuring compliance. While mandatory reporting improves data collection, enforcement difficulties must be considered when evaluating its accuracy.

## Comments:

- **Rick Bellavance - Owner/Operator of Priority Fishing Charters in Point Judith, RI; President of the Rhode Island Party/Charter Association; President of the East Coast Fishing Coalition**
  - I've been a ***longtime supporter of managing the for-hire sector separately*** from private recreational anglers because our motivations and needs are different. Managing the two sectors independently would benefit everyone and help reduce conflicts that have existed for years. Out of the two approaches in the scoping document, ***mode management is the only one that makes sense*** to me right now, especially given the known biases in MRIP data, which make setting separate ACLs challenging. Now is not the time to develop allocations.
  - The for-hire sector has been shrinking, and we need solutions fast. Managing the recreational fishery by mode will be the quickest way to address this issue and the least controversial. If we set regulations separately for private and for-hire anglers, it would provide stability and prevent further decline within the recreational fishery, particularly the for-hire sector. For-hire regulations should ideally be set for a few years at a time, allowing adjustments as needed.
  - I'm also concerned about latent federal permits—nearly 70% of them don't report any activity. We need to explore a permit bank or apprentice program that would ***allow for new entries into the fishery but prevent anglers from switching between fishing sectors*** to take advantage of more favorable regulations. ***However, I do not think a limited access program is the answer.***
  - As for the data collection component, **all states should require permits and mandatory reporting for for-hire operators**, which would include “do not fish” reports similar to what we have in place in Rhode Island. The tools for such requirements already exist and federal permit holders have been reporting their catch for years.

- **Willy Hatch - Charter Boat in Cape Cod, MA; President of the Cape Cod Charter Boat Association; Secretary of the East Coast Fishing Coalition; Board member of the Selwagon Bank Charter Boat Association**
  - ***Mode management is essential to keeping our businesses viable.*** We need reasonable bag limits and stable seasons to attract customers to book trips. In Massachusetts we've used mode management which has been working well. We already have a bonus season for scup in the spring and tautog in the fall, and a higher bag limit for bluefish, and a charter/headboat permit for bluefin tuna.
  - ***I oppose limited entry.*** In the Gulf, they have limited entry for federal reef species, and many of us in the industry do not support this approach. The number of boats in the business has already gone down, and external barriers to make it as a for-hire captain continue to be problematic, for example the increasing cost of boats, boat slips, and other operating costs, and we continue to see a decline in captains given these challenges.
  - ***I oppose separate ACLs for the for-hire and private recreational modes at this time.*** As others have noted, there are large discrepancies in MRIP data and I think we need to fix the catch/landings data issues before exploring separate ACLs and quotas. Following the MRIP recalibration that may take place in a few years may be the ideal timing for exploring separate recreational ACLs. So for now, ***I support mode management.***
  - I also worry about recreational anglers getting charter licenses just to take advantage of potentially more favorable regulations. ***I support having certain requirements that would support the legitimacy of a for-hire license and believe regulations like mandatory reporting, proof of a captain's license, and state permits*** could be some of the ways to do this.
  - As for the data collection component of the amendment, ***I support enhanced for-hire eVTRs.*** This is already a requirement for federal permit holders that is simple to do and produces good quality data that we have asked management to better incorporate in the process for years. As for private recreational data, many anglers get their license online and would recommend using an approach similar to what is done for hunting in many states, which could include a survey when an angler initially gets a license.
- **Raymond Bogan - NJ**
  - I have concerns related to separate allocations given poor quality of recreational MRIP data, and have concerns with this micro-approach to management when we already know the data is highly uncertain. However, this would not be as big of an issue for separate measures. We've seen examples of this being successful over the years, for example bluefish. These mode-specific regulations can be easily understood by all anglers, are enforceable, and can be monitored. ***I would support mode management, but do not support separate allocations or ACLs.*** However, the real issue is the flawed fishery management system itself. We've sacrificed to rebuild stocks, only to be punished with further cuts once the stocks are rebuilt.
  - ***I do not support limited entry.*** The for-hire industry has been shrinking for years, maybe with an exception to the guides which includes a very small number of boats that are only accessible to a relatively small number of individuals. In addition to a decreasing



for-hire participants, even private sector numbers have dropped based on vessel registration trends in New Jersey, New York, and several other states despite MRIP suggesting a more stable participation. The management system in general needs major improvements given currently it is harming businesses more than helping them.

- ***Voluntary programs should be considered, provided they follow a reasonable format with appropriate restrictions.*** Funding is limited, and scientists have taken a cautious approach to using voluntary data. However, there are successful examples of these programs, which I think Mike can elaborate on.

- **Mike Pierdinock - Charter Boat Captain; President of the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association**

- My comments are on behalf of the Sellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association. I agree with the previous speakers: Mr. Bellavance, Mr. Hatch, and Mr. Bogan. ***Our association fully supports mode management*** given the ongoing evaluation of the MRIP data and lack of clarity on how the outcomes of that evaluation will impact catch estimates and proportions of estimated catch by mode.
- In Massachusetts, state-permitted for-hire vessels do not have reporting requirements. ***Recommend that states like Massachusetts implement mandatory for-hire reporting requirements to improve data collection.*** In addition to mandatory state-for-hire reporting requirements, we believe that the current Recreational Bio Project that is currently collecting weight, lengths, and other biological samples for cod should be expanded to include other areas, species, and eventually the entire fleet.
- For recreational anglers a number of reporting apps already exist, but there still appears to be an issue with how such data is shared with ACCSP and the agencies that would utilize the information. ***Recommend resolving this issue and requiring mandatory recreational reporting in state and federal waters.*** Also recommend encouraging reporting by offering incentives, for example, Massachusetts DMF rewards striped bass reports with chances to win equipment. There are a number of incentive programs that already exist and could be explored to optimize reporting and improve upon the data collected.
- There's also a major issue with MRIP dockside intercepts incorrectly assigning catch locations, which has been particularly problematic for cod and other species like pelagics. This inaccuracy affects both fisheries management and has been a road block for collaborations with Wind Energy companies trying to understand where fishing activity takes place. We need a more reliable system to track where fish are actually caught, rather than relying on where the intercept occurred.
- To expand on some successful voluntary reporting, a few years ago, we observed a shift in recreational bluefin tuna stocks due to changing ocean temperatures, with fish being captured as far north as Maine. To document this, we collected photos and location data, demonstrating that bluefin were being caught and released in large numbers across state and federal waters. A similar approach was used for cod, with photos submitted to ACCSP. The existing app used in Rhode Island could be leveraged for these species as well. These examples have demonstrated there are multiple ways to enhance data collection for fisheries management through voluntary reporting programs.

- **Eric Morrow - Bounty Hunter Sport Fishing Charters (MA and RI); Bounty Hunter Outfitters Tackle Shop (MA); Board member of Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association**
  - ***I've been pushing for mode management from the beginning, and I fully support it.***  
The industry is significantly declining, people are leaving left and right, and it's getting harder to stay afloat. We need higher bag limits to attract customers and keep people coming back. We've already established successful mode management for multiple species
  - ***I'm strongly opposed to limited entry.*** There are about 900 permits out there, but only about half are actively used for the fishery we're discussing. ***Massachusetts needs to tighten its requirements for for-hire reporting, including mandatory eVTRs.*** Other states already require this, and Massachusetts should do the same. ***Recreational anglers should also be required to report their catch,*** and we could use an app-based system like Florida's Fish Verify. Everyone has a smartphone now and it wouldn't be hard to implement.
- **Mike Waine - American Sport Fish Association**
  - I want to know if this amendment would allow unused commercial quota to be transferred to the for-hire sector when the commercial fleet isn't using it. There are plenty of fisheries where this could be beneficial.
- **Vincent McCarthy - Bounty Hunter Sport Fishing Charters (MA and RI)**
  - I've been working with Eric Morrow for 15 years, and over time, I've seen participation drop off. I remember taking out three or four generations of a family on a single trip. However, now, that just doesn't happen as much. Bag limits are more restrictive and trips are more expensive, so it's harder to get people out on the water. We need to think about how to reenergize this fishery before it's too late.



### 3. Written Comments

The following written comments were submitted as part of the public scoping process for the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment. These comments were received through various submission methods, including online form, email, and mailed correspondence. The deadline for written comments was **March 20, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.** All comments provided prior to this deadline are provided below.

DRAFT

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## Recreational Sector Separation

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**From** Eric Burnley <eburnle@aol.com>

**Date** Sun 1/26/2025 2:00 PM

**To** Dancy, Kiley <kdancy@mafmc.org>

Kiley, This is a very bad idea. A recreational fisherman is a recreational fisherman no matter where he or she stands and fishes. It makes no difference if they are on a head boat, charter boat, the beach, a pier or on their own boat or fishing on a friend's boat. The only possible reason for separating the for-hire sector from the rest of us is to take more fish as they have done with bluefish and tilefish. There is no good reason for awarding the for-hire sector more fish other than greed. No one is going to pay \$100 just to catch two more bluefish. Let's keep the division of the resource evenly divided between all sectors of the recreational fishery. Eric B. Burnley, Sr.

**From:** [Steve Kuhlman](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [Steve Kuhlman](#)  
**Subject:** Regulations involving limits  
**Date:** Friday, January 31, 2025 4:00:06 PM

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[You don't often get email from kuhlmanvmd@aol.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

I am a recreational fisherman and primarily fish for flounder or sea bass, and occasionally tog. I use private boats through the Freedom Boat Club out of Lewes or Long Neck. I occasionally go out on a charter or head boat with my club, the Indy Anglers. I usually get out once a week from May through November, depending on the weather.

I am concerned about the fishing limits for recreational anglers being less for me on my boat than I can keep if I were on a head boat (or charter). For example, it doesn't make sense to me that I can fish on my boat and only keep 4 fish one day, but the next day I can keep 6 if I go out on a head boat. I have the same general expenses that the commercial boats do. Regulations for recreational fishermen should be the same; it shouldn't matter if I'm fishing from the shore, my boat or a head boat. Please make the regulations on limits with some common sense!

Thank you,  
Steve Kuhlman  
Millsboro, DE

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [David Quigley](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [Burnley, Eric](#)  
**Subject:** Objection to Discriminatory Recreational Fishing Limits  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 7:47:23 AM

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You don't often get email from quigleyd@delaware.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

**David Quigley**

**20356 Cool Spring rd**

**Milton De 19968**

**2/1/2025**

I am writing to formally protest the recent decision to consider a smaller catch limit on recreational fishermen compared to other fishing groups. This regulation unfairly restricts responsible anglers while allowing commercial operations and other sectors to continue fishing with more lenient quotas.

Recreational fishing is not only a beloved pastime but also a significant contributor to local economies, conservation efforts, and community well-being. By imposing stricter limits on recreational fishermen, the policy disproportionately affects small-scale anglers without addressing the larger environmental and economic impacts caused by commercial overfishing.

As a recreational fisherman, my expenses—boat maintenance, fuel, gear, and permits—are just as high as those of a commercial head boat. The difference is that I must cover all of these costs myself, without customers or subsidies to help offset them. By lowering the catch limits for recreational anglers, this policy directly reduces my ability to bring home fish to enjoy with my family. Essentially, it increases the cost per fish I am allowed to catch, making it a much more expensive and frustrating endeavor.

Recreational and commercial fishermen should be playing on equal grounds. If conservation is the goal, the burden should be shared fairly across all sectors, rather than disproportionately affecting those of us who fish for personal enjoyment and sustenance.

I urge you to reconsider this decision and implement fair, balanced regulations that do not unjustly target recreational fishermen. A more equitable approach—one that takes into account conservation needs without unnecessarily penalizing individuals who enjoy fishing for sport and sustenance—is crucial.

Please let me know how this matter can be further discussed and what steps are being taken to address these concerns. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
David Quigley  
(302) 383-2767

**From:** [Donald & Earleen Bunting](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational fishing regulations  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 10:37:17 AM

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You don't often get email from irieislandtime@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am a 68 year old recreation fisherman who has lived and fished in Sussex county all my life. I am against different bag limits for private anglers and for-hire or charter boats. Everyone should have the same opportunity to bring home the same bag limits no matter where they are fishing or whom they are fishing with in Delaware waters!

Donald Bunting  
302-542-6392

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

**From:** [Gary King](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Not fair  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 12:29:56 PM

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[You don't often get email from [gking5090@gmail.com](mailto:gking5090@gmail.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

To whom I'm referring to the article that I read about fishing I live in Delaware my parents lost their home along route 1 south years ago it was route 42 now route 1 Indian river was hopping with small buildings lost gone now as years go by still Local Fishermen have to Lose More Rights to Fish it' seems that you Aren't a True Fisherman ask your self What is a True Fisherman We pay for our boats we pay for the license we pay the boat license we pay for travel for the boat plus pay insurance plus pay Tow Boat in case we Break Down so Why Punish the Fisherman The Private Boats Owner Limited Us This is Totally Unfair. Be Honest with Yourself Honestly Do You Fish Be Honest If Not Answer WHY YOUR COMMENT WANT TO HURT PRIVATE BOAT OWNERS THAT FISH BE HONEST IF YOU CAN. LEAVE IT ALL UP TO EVERYONE THE. SAME WAY FAIR NO LESS BECAUSE THE RICH PEOPLE WANT TO PUSH OUT THE REAL FISHING PEOPLE THAT HAVE PRIVATE VESSELS KEEP IT THE SAME DONT CHANGE ANYTHING ZERO AND MOST OF ALL BE HONEST TELL THE TRUE FISHERMAN THAT YOU EITHER WANT TO SEE SMALL VESSELS KEEP WHAT THE BIG VESSEL KEEPS SMALL VESSELS CANNOT GO OUT 35-40 out BE HONEST AND SAY ALL VESSELS WILL KEEP THE SAME ABOUT NO LESS NO MORE ALL THE SAME BE HONEST IT GOES A LONG WAY TO BE HONEST STOP HURTING THE SMALL VESSELS FISHING PEOPLE SAME FOR THEM SAME FOR US SMALL VESSELS GET THE SAME AS BIG VESSELS DO NO LESS AND REMEMBER HONESTLY PAY OR TELLING A LIE WILL GET YOUR OPINION NO WHERE I RATHER BE HONEST THEN LIE  
KEEP THE FISHING CACTH THE SAME NO MATTER HOW BIG OF A VESSEL ALL THE SAME LIMIT

**From:** [Michael Loeffler](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing limits  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 3:45:09 PM

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You don't often get email from michaelloeffler82@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello there, I just wanted to write to you and let you know my opinion on the fishing limits. I believe that everybody has a right to go catch their fish and the limit should be the same no matter who they are. Having a higher limit for the head boats or even the charter boats is not fair to the recreational Fisher. We all bear taxes and we all pay our licensing fees and we all should have a fair shot. Should not be allowed to be exploited by one particular segment of the population or another.

Warm Regards, Michael Loeffler

**From:** [David Bartlett Sr](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [Cimino, Joseph](#); [john.clark@state.de.us](mailto:john.clark@state.de.us); [fishmaster70@comcast.net](mailto:fishmaster70@comcast.net); [lynn.fegley@maryland.gov](mailto:lynn.fegley@maryland.gov); [theo.stein@noaa.gov](mailto:theo.stein@noaa.gov); [Jim Johnson](#)  
**Subject:** scoping document / fish limits..?  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 4:20:38 PM

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You don't often get email from [david.j.bartlett.sr@gmail.com](mailto:david.j.bartlett.sr@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Hello,

I just read an article that the The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is actually considering the idea of separating the recreational fishery between the for-hire and the remainder of the recreational fishery. This would include regulations for black sea bass, scup, summer flounder and bluefish.

How on God's green earth can this even be a consideration..?!?!? Recreational fishermen/women pay taxes just like the for hire captains. Anyone with basic math skills would know that the recreational folks pay a LOT more in taxes, than for hire captains...!

As a recreational angler, I stood by quietly when the for hire folks had their limits of bluefish increased and we had our limits decreased, HOWEVER, when it impacts fish that my family, friends and I target during the summer months, any consideration that ASMFC may even consider , is simply unfair. I am certain you can not sit back and wonder "why" lawsuits are filed when it comes to rules like this being placed into law for the minority vs large number of recreational folks.

Any simple minded person can see that the ASMFC is making decisions to benefit regulations that are driven by a small group of head boat operators with a good deal of clout. This



simply can NOT be allowed to happen. The recreational anglers sat by without much fight when it came to bluefish as few of us target this species, however - flounder and sea bass are quite another thing.

If you are NOT the right person to contact with regards to this current scoping document, please tell me who is...

Thank you,

David Bartlett Sr.

**From:** [Paul Coco](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 5:39:02 PM

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You don't often get email from teamcoastal50@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I'm your standard recreational fishermen. I get to fish about maybe 10 × 12 times during the summer time. I consider myself pretty good. I used to own a place Down the beach in Delaware.

The size limit of black sea bass could never catch your own full limit and it was always difficult to catch one. That was legal, so believe that all the head boats and private charter. Overfish the system so the recreational angler is cut short. I don't think it's fair. I believe. It should be one set limit and 1 set size for keeper fish.

Same thing is happening with the striped bass I fish the Chesapeake Bay for 20 years. All the big fish that I used to catch in the late 90s and early 2000. Was unbelievable since the omega boat came in there and had all those bunker, fish and call pastor limit and nothing never happened to them. We don't have striped bass likely used to I don't fish any more. The tournament, because of that fact, I just wanna have these fish. For my grandchildren's future.

**From:** [Nick Talmo](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Inconsistent Creel Limits  
**Date:** Saturday, February 1, 2025 9:01:52 PM

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[You don't often get email from [ntalmo@comcast.net](mailto:ntalmo@comcast.net). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

I recently read Eric Burnley's article describing some of the possible scenarios in setting creel limits higher for head and charter boats than what is allowed for private boats and shore anglers. This is extremely unfair and sets elite and commoner classes in managing a common resource. This should not be permitted.

I own a boat and am a resident of Delaware. I buy fuel, bait, tackle, licenses and registrations. I buy a surf tag. At present, I am permitted to only keep three bluefish. Customers on a head or charter boat can keep five. I understand that my already paltry four flounder limit and other species could be further reduced to allow head and charters to keep more. This cannot be allowed in good conscience. Each person, regardless of where or how they recreationally fish, should be required to follow the same size and creel limits. There should exist no 'elite' class that gets a higher share of the common resource solely because of the boat from which they fish. I have always respected and abided by size and creel limits, feeling I'm doing my best to protect the resource. But I will not sit quietly by if these requirements are twisted to favor a few. That is not how common resources should be managed. By taking the fairness out of the system, you degrade our faith in it, and invite widespread non-compliance.

I may fish only once a week or less. Sometimes only a few times per month. Head and charter boats fish daily and consume much more of the resource than me. But my creel limit may go down to support them? Incredibly unfair. Please maintain the integrity of the regulations and do not steal from the general public to enrich a few.

Nick Talmo

**From:** [Bob Festa](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** The asmfc is a corrupt organization made up mostly of commercial fishing interests dedicated to advancing there interests at the expense of the recreational fisherman .not only are they corrupt but they are a complete failure atat managing the fish sto...  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 7:42:13 AM

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You don't often get email from bobfestacabinetmaker@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

**From:** [David Orth](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** recreational fishing  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 8:05:32 AM

---

You don't often get email from dgtrp27l@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

a recreational fisherman is a recreational fisherman if he fishes from a boat or shore, pays a captain or buys his own fuel. Uniform bag limits across the board!

**From:** [Larry Robertson](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational fishing  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 8:57:10 AM

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You don't often get email from [bmw607lr@gmail.com](mailto:bmw607lr@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Please keep recreational fishing the same for all.

**From:** [Ken Miller](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fish creel limit"s  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 9:20:50 AM

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You don't often get email from 77kenmiller@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I agree with Mr. Burnley. Why do the "recreational fishing people" get penalized when fishing. We are all the same. I fish on my own boat, charter boats and on friends boats. I'm still a "recreational fishing person". I spend a lot of money on fishing that helps with the economy. If I were to give up on 1 or 2 of them it would be a loss of income for some businesses. Please make us all the same whatever the creel limits are. Thank you for understanding.

**From:** [billyarro](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** I think it's a crying shame to allow head boats and charter boats to keep more fish per person than a recreational fisherman from a boat or fishing from the shore. Shame on the people who allow this.  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 9:39:27 AM

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You don't often get email from billyarro@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Sent from my T-Mobile 5G Device



**From:** [JT Best](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** This so wrong  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 9:40:42 AM

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You don't often get email from jtbest176@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

**From:** [Jay Stratton](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 9:54:52 AM

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You don't often get email from rjays33@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Just want to voice my opinion on increasing the bag limit on for hire fisherman and charters. We need to protect our fish for the future generations. This is just a tactic for these charters to make more money. It has nothing to do with the management of our fisheries, in fact it does just the opposite. I vote against the increase in bag limits on these charters to protect our fisheries for the future

**From:** [Alex Hudson](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing regulations  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 10:19:37 AM

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[You don't often get email from alexhudson4355@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

The divison of bag limit of fish between recreational anglers and captains is excuse my language bull shit .

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [J M](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Unfair bag limit !  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 11:24:11 AM

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You don't often get email from jjmch23@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Whoever came up with his idea to screw the recreational fisherman is totally out of sync. I guess the only way these things are going to be fixed to make it fair. If the regular recreational fishermen takes those people to court.

**From:** [jhswolf@aol.com](mailto:jhswolf@aol.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing Limits  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 12:42:19 PM

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You don't often get email from [jhswolf@aol.com](mailto:jhswolf@aol.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

Good morning,

I am a DE resident and I wanted to express my feelings about the Commission's scoping document outlining the idea of separating the recreational fishery between the for-hire and the remainder of the fishery. I am not in favor of this at all. I believe a recreational fisherman is a recreational fisherman no matter where he or she fishes. Please treat us all the same.

Thank you,  
John Schoenewolf  
38386 James A St.  
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971  
571-217-9886

**From:** [charlie petrocci](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational fish Harvesting  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 2:31:01 PM

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You don't often get email from fishhead414@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Make recreational fish harvest creel limits the same for ALL anglers and for ALL species ,  
whether from private or for hire fishing activity.

That is common sense unilateral management at its best and unbiased.

C. Petrocci

**From:** [Thomas Kiley](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Limits should be the same for everyone  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 6:21:10 PM

---

You don't often get email from tom.kiley@comcast.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

In the article I just read, the author stated

"I have said this before, and I will say it again. A recreational fisherman is a recreational fisherman no matter where he or she fishes. The regulations should be the same no matter if he or she happens to be on the beach, at Indian River Inlet, on a head boat, a charter boat, his or her own boat or on a friend's boat. Period!"

I have been fishing Massachusetts waters for 60+ years, and love it - from a boat, from a dock, from the shore or as a paid patron on someone else's boat or charter.

There should not be special interests when setting limits.

Please protect the fish stock by setting consistent limits, the same for everyone!

**From:** [Richard samalonis](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fish limits  
**Date:** Sunday, February 2, 2025 7:41:33 PM

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You don't often get email from richardsamalonis@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Fish limits stay the same for everybody. Rich Samalonis



**From:** [robert nester](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational fishing should be the same creed limit where ever the fisherman decides to fish and not because they feel they need to support professional fishing to get more fish. Thanks Bob Nester  
**Date:** Monday, February 3, 2025 7:43:02 AM

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You don't often get email from robertnester2015@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

**From:** [Paul Trainor](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** I think recreational fisherman fishing from their own boat should be allowed the same number of fish as fisherman are allowed on a party boat. Recreational fisherman contribute millions of dollars to our local economy yearly.  
**Date:** Monday, February 3, 2025 5:07:26 PM

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Thank you, Paul Trainor  
Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Kyle B](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational fishing concerns  
**Date:** Monday, February 3, 2025 2:15:12 PM

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You don't often get email from kabkmt@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To whom it may concern,

Please do not further allow the separation of the recreational fishery between the for-hire and the remainder of the fishery. This practice was done with bluefish and is wildly unfair to those of us that prefer to fish alone and not on for-hire boats. Recreational fisherman already face enough challenges without further schisms in regulation. The only reason this is being considered is a group of well-connected head boat operators seek to further line their own pockets by dividing recreational fisherman at the expense of individuals. If anything it would make more sense to move for-hire head boats under the regulations of commercial fishermen, since they stand to make money off fishing.

K Bradley

**From:** [Burl Self](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Monday, February 3, 2025 3:03:22 PM

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You don't often get email from b\_e\_self@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Separate and close menhaden fisheries.

Best

Burl self

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

**From:** [Rick D](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Bias and prejudice fishing regs  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 8:15:58 AM

---

You don't often get email from rickd27865@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

So blatant is the bribery and preferential treatment of head boat operators that you allow them greater catch limits over private fisherman. You should be ashamed , fired, and investigated for such heinous policy that flies in the face of all being treated equal. One nation under god, does that even ring a bell w you people?

**From:** [Keith Mervine](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing bag limits  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 7:26:17 PM

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You don't often get email from sbernardbigdog17@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Think all limits should be the same. On a boat, on shore it should be the same.

**From:** [Carmine Melito](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 5, 2025 1:17:59 PM

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You don't often get email from carminemelito2@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

It is my strongest opinion that ALL recreational fishermen/ women should be subject to the same regulations.

**From:** [teamoptimiss@aol.com](mailto:teamoptimiss@aol.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [nbk280@hotmail.com](mailto:nbk280@hotmail.com); [CAPTAINFLATTY@COMCAST.NET](mailto:CAPTAINFLATTY@COMCAST.NET); [WILLIAM RUST](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Fishing  
**Date:** Thursday, February 6, 2025 5:59:03 PM

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You don't often get email from [teamoptimiss@aol.com](mailto:teamoptimiss@aol.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

I do not agree in separating the for hire fisherman from the rest of us. The recreational sector is the recreational sector whether you fish from a head boat..charter boat...private boat or from shore. We should not be penalized for not fishing from a for hire option. All recreational fisherman should be subject to the same regulations. Thank You !

[Sent from AOL on Android](#)



**From:** [Frank Rella](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, February 6, 2025 5:45:45 PM

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You don't often get email from frankrella53@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

You have to look at how much money is brought in from private boaters it should all be the same limits it's time to wake up. there is probably 1000 private boaters for every party boat everyone should be treated the same.

**From:** [Arthur James](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fluke regs proposal  
**Date:** Thursday, February 6, 2025 4:08:34 PM

---

You don't often get email from amjretired@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

As a rec fishing from the surf or a kayak and regarding summer flounder (fluke): Season mid May through September, 18" to 24" slot size limit and a bag limit of TWO. Or we can just keep decimating the fishery.

Art James  
Massapequa NY

**From:** [Karl Owen](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing limits  
**Date:** Friday, February 7, 2025 1:06:59 PM

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You don't often get email from karlowen638@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am a private fisherman. I have poured money into this economy buying a boat, gear, licenses and by supporting the local businesses doing it. It's unfair for the charter guys to have a higher limit than us. We are not making money as they are. All the ones I know do this as a second income and to pay for their own fun. Where as I only get out 10 times a year they are out every other day at least. So I feel that our impact to the numbers pales in comparison to theirs. Let's make the catch limits the same for everyone fishing please. Thank you

**From:** [john watson](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fish limits  
**Date:** Sunday, February 9, 2025 11:32:42 PM

---

You don't often get email from sackiewatson@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

A person fishing from shore should be treated the same so wrong .A lot of people can't afford a charter boat .now you going to penalize people

**Key takeaway:** I am extremely concerned about the potential impacts of inaccurate MRIP data on sector separation. Specifically, I am very apprehensive that sector separation will lead directly to complete closure of entire fisheries to private recreational fisherman based on inaccurate MRIP private boat, rental boat and shore data.

I recommend an emphasis on the need for improved data accuracy and a cautious, incremental approach that demonstrates a commitment to both sound science and a desire to minimize the potential negative impacts of sector separation on the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass and Bluefish fisheries.

## Issue 1 Recreational Sector Separation

### 1. Do you believe recreational sector separation should be explored for these fisheries? Why or why not?

- While sector separation has the potential to improve management, the significant uncertainty associated with MRIP data presents an enormous risk. Implementing sector separation without addressing these data limitations will lead to:
  - **Misallocation of catch:** Inaccurate data will result in unequal or unfair allocations between sectors, potentially harming one sector while the other overfishes.
  - **Misguided management decisions:** Management actions based on inaccurate data will be ineffective or even detrimental to the fishery.
  - **Erosion of trust:** Anglers will lose trust in the management process if they perceive that decisions are based on flawed data.
- MRIP data for the private recreational sector has never been accurate. Once again it is undergoing major recalibrations. Based on the results of previous recalibrations there is absolutely no basis or reason to believe the current recalibration will result in accurate data. Therefore, I believe verified significant improvements to MRIP data accuracy are crucial before proceeding with sector separation.

### 2. If you support recreational sector separation, what approaches do you think would be most appropriate and why?

- Given the current data limitations, I do not support recreational sector separation. However, I believe any initial steps towards sector separation should be cautious and incremental.
  - **Focus on data improvement:** Prioritize investments in improving MRIP data accuracy before implementing major changes to the management structure.
  - **Pilot programs:** Consider small-scale pilot programs to test sector separation approaches with limited impacts on the fishery.
  - **Regularly evaluate and adjust:** Continuously monitor the impacts of any sector separation measures and make adjustments as needed based on the latest data and feedback from stakeholders.

### 3. If sector separation is pursued, should the Council and Commission consider setting limits on the ability to obtain or retain federal for-hire permits? (e.g., restrictions on the number of permits available, additional permit criteria or requirements, limits on the ability to temporarily drop and re-apply for these permits, etc.)

- Given the uncertainty surrounding MRIP data, implementing significant restrictions on for-hire permits at this time is premature and potentially harmful to the for-hire sector.
  - **Focus on data-driven decisions:** Any decisions regarding permit limitations should be based on accurate and reliable data, not speculative assumptions.

- **Avoid overly restrictive measures:** Avoid implementing overly restrictive measures that could disproportionately impact the for-hire sector before the impacts of sector separation can be fully understood.

#### 4. What else should the Council and Commission consider relative to recreational sector separation?

- The Council and Commission should carefully consider the potential social and economic impacts of sector separation on both the for-hire and private recreational sectors.
  - **Thorough economic impact assessments:** Conduct thorough economic impact assessments to understand the potential consequences of sector separation on businesses, jobs, and communities.
  - **Stakeholder engagement:** Engage in ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders, including for-hire businesses, private anglers, and conservation organizations, to ensure their concerns are addressed.

### Issue 2 Recreational Data Collection

#### 1. What do you think are the most critical areas of improvement needed for recreational data collection?

- **Addressing the potential 30-40% inaccuracy in MRIP data is paramount. This requires a multifaceted approach, including:**
  - **Improving MRIP methodology:**
    - **Common sense review of re-calibrated data:** MRIP data has been recalibrated numerous times. Every recalibration resulted in data rife with illogical data. Best available common sense is needed to validate best available science.
    - **Investigating and addressing potential biases:** Further research is needed to understand and mitigate potential biases in current MRIP methodologies, such as sampling design, survey methods, and data analysis techniques.
    - **Evaluating and refining the Fishing Effort Survey (FES):** Focus on improving the accuracy of the FES, particularly in estimating effort for private recreational anglers.
  - **Exploring alternative data sources:** Investigate the potential of incorporating alternative data sources, such as for-hire boat captain observations of Private boat effort, placing cameras at inlets to determine effort, Global Fishing Watch, Google's anonymized location data, electronic logbooks, social media data, or citizen science initiatives, to supplement and validate MRIP estimates.

#### 2. Should some form of catch reporting for recreational anglers fishing from private vessels and the shore be considered in this amendment? Why or why not?

- While mandatory reporting for private anglers could potentially improve data accuracy, it is crucial to carefully weigh the potential benefits against the potential costs and challenges.
  - **Focus on feasibility and angler acceptance:** Any mandatory reporting program must be carefully designed to minimize the burden on anglers, address privacy concerns, and ensure high levels of compliance. When an angler has a fish out of the water, both the angler and the fish are primarily concerned with getting the fish back in the water as fast as possible. The fish for survivability and the angler so they can get line back in the water to maximize catch. This primary concern of both fish and angler are directly in conflict with determining and recording accurate data.
  - **Pilot programs:** Consider piloting small-scale mandatory reporting programs to evaluate their effectiveness and identify potential challenges before implementing them on a larger scale.

**3. Are revisions to for-hire data collection methods and reporting requirements needed? If so, what types of changes should be considered in this amendment?**

- **Continued improvements to for-hire data collection are essential. This could include:**
  - **Streamlining reporting processes:** Explore ways to streamline electronic reporting for for-hire vessels, such as improving user interfaces and reducing data entry burdens. One example is to not ask how deep the water is at the fishing location. Given the fishing location, NOAA knows the depth.
  - **Improving data quality:** Implement quality control measures to ensure the accuracy and completeness of for-hire trip reports. Add question(s) about for-hire captain's observations of Private Boat effort (e.g., number of private boats observed).
  - **Exploring alternative technologies:** Investigate the potential of using electronic logbooks or other technologies to automate data collection from for-hire vessels.

**4. Are there other options not listed here related to recreational data collection and catch estimation that should be considered?**

- Yes, several other options should be explored:
  - **Developing independent data validation methods:** Explore methods to independently validate MRIP estimates, such as catch-per-unit-effort analyses from independent sources or mark-recapture studies. Place cameras at inlets and count boats for independent validation of effort. Ask for-hire boat captain's the number of private boats they observed for independent validation of effort.
  - **Investing in research and development:** Support research and development efforts to improve recreational fisheries data collection methodologies and technologies.

**5. What else should the Council and Commission consider relative to recreational data collection and catch estimation?**

- **"The Council and Commission should:**
  - **Prioritize data accuracy:** Make improving the accuracy and reliability of recreational data a top priority.
  - **Engage stakeholders:** Actively engage with anglers, for-hire businesses, and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of data collection programs.
  - **Regularly review and evaluate:** Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of data collection methods and make adjustments as needed to ensure the highest quality data possible.

In conjunction with Google Gemini AI  
Craig A. McIlrath  
NJ Private Recreational Saltwater Fisherman  
38 Mill Park Lane, Marlton NJ 08053  
[blandmail@comcast.net](mailto:blandmail@comcast.net)  
856-905-1711

**From:** [BAM's Dad](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 11, 2025 12:28:56 PM

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You don't often get email from brucefriedman@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I appreciate the opportunity to submit comments regarding the potential bifurcation of regulations within the recreational fisheries sector. My concern is that this bifurcation will result in for-hire fishing vessels getting larger allocation of quotas at the expense of private recreational fishers. This is already the case with bluefish where a for-hire vessel angler is allowed 5 bluefish and a private/shore angler is allowed 3 fish. Additionally, the Striped Bass Bonus Program(SBBP) is different for Party/Charter Boats and individual anglers. For-hire vessels are allowed to provide a Striped Bass Bonus Permit for each angler on their vessel each day. Individual anglers apply for a Bonus Tag and are issued a single tag which may be used once. This already creates a huge discrepancy in the allocation of the striped bass quota between For-hire and private/shore anglers. Further bifurcation of the regulations within the recreational sector will create additional discrepancies all likely favoring the for-hire industry.

I understand that for-hire fishing vessels such as head boats and charter boats rely on customers to remain profitable. Obviously more recreational anglers will charter a boat or spend money to fish on a head boat if there are fish to catch and they can keep more of what they catch. These are the simple economics of for-hire vessels. For-hire vessel Captains are well aware of the economics of their business and therefore make sure their voices are heard through national and local organizations such as the National Association of Charterboat Operators. Private recreational anglers do not have the same ability to lobby for favorable recreational size and possession limits putting them at a further disadvantage.

In simplest terms, there are only so many fish allocated in a quota. The more fish allocated to For-hire vessels, the less available to the fishing public. And where will it stop? Will For-hire vessels be afforded smaller size limits, greater possession limits as well as longer seasons? Size limits, possession limits and season length are all part of the equation.

Private recreational anglers are major drivers of the huge recreational angler economy. We support the boat building industry, coastal tourism, local marinas, bait and tackle shops and local restaurants. I invested in my boat, I pay for a boat slip, I purchase bait and ice, I buy rods, reels, and tackle. I spend literally thousands of dollars each year to catch and keep a couple of flounder (if I'm lucky). I'm not making any money, but there are plenty of people who are because I like to go out on my boat and fish. At what point do the economics stop working for the private recreational angler? When I decide that enough is enough, a lot of other folks are going to suffer. The NJ recreational size, possession and season limits are already frustrating for recreational anglers, it will be even more difficult to tolerate if For-hire recreational anglers are given different rules to follow.

Best Regards - Bruce Friedman

--

Bruce Friedman  
856-236-7237



**From:** [PATRICK WHITE](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Rec. sector separation and data collection  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 11, 2025 3:24:15 PM

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Thanks for the opportunity to comment about the sector separation. I am in favor of the proposed separation of recreational from for-hire. However, I believe there is another separation that should be considered. The following suggestions only apply to the summer flounder fishery.

For many years I have written to ASMFC and NJ fishery council about the need to separate the surf (land based) fishery from the boat fishery. It is obvious that these two sectors are targeting two different biomasses of fluke.

Last year NJ Fish and Game made 5 proposals and requested comments from the public. The 2 regulations getting the most comments were:

#32 5/4-9/25 3 fish  $\geq 18"$  145 days

#57 5/16-9/23 3 fish  $\geq 18"$  131 days  
2 fish  $\geq 17"$  from shore

Obviously, the vast majority of the boat fishers voted for #32 since it was the longest season, and they gained nothing by supporting #57.

However, the majority of the shore-based anglers wanted #57. They were willing to take a shorter season and a lower limit. The reason is they realize they are targeting a biomass with a smaller average size.

I know this is anecdotal evidence, but it demonstrates the size difference of surf fluke. Last year I caught over 2100 fluke and only had 34 keepers.

Patrick White

**From:** [Jean Public](#)  
**To:** [Tracey Bauer](#); [Dancy, Kiley](#); [info@defenders.org](mailto:info@defenders.org); [info@oceana.org](mailto:info@oceana.org); [info@earthjustice.org](mailto:info@earthjustice.org)  
**Subject:** Fw: REVISED NJ HEARING DATE: MAFMC and ASMFC to Hold Public Information/Scoping Hearings on Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 12, 2025 9:41:14 AM

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public comment on federal register

i think all quotas for flunder, bass, etc should be cut by 50% for both commercial and rtecreational harvest. this agency is in fact causing extinction of species. jean publie jeanpublic1@yahoo.com

**From:** [Gary King](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** ????  
**Date:** Saturday, February 15, 2025 5:44:30 PM

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I'm a fisherman myself I fish myself for over 58 years I have never would expect this to be never have I the people that want to control this issue seem like they have never put a rod in their hands nor have any parents show them anything about fishing today fishing is getting to be more government control. What they should be doing is. Stop the big fishing net People can only eat fish so much there is also the food stores wasting fish because it ruins Fish market the same. But to take away private owners boats that don't go out far you're administration wants to take away from us fishermen no matter it is unnecessary to hurt us who buys the bait supply fuel license to the water to the state register your boat paying insurance ect please don't do this to us regular fishing boats go after the big huge fishing vessels that takes in everything I'm sure they don't come there nor tell your company the truth stop them from hauling in thousand of fish

**Attention: Kiley Dancy**

**Public Comment for  
Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection**

**Dear Commission**

Scoping/Public Comment Questions

Do you believe recreational sector separation should be explored for these fisheries? Why or why not?

**Yes, I support recreational sector separation. I believe it is essential for the continued viability of the for-hire sector and the economic benefits it brings to our coastal community. The separation would allow for more tailored management and regulations that cater specifically to the needs and characteristics of the for-hire sector, ensuring its sustainability and growth. I also believe that the reporting of a separate for-hire sector will provide better science for fisheries management.**

If you support recreational sector separation, what approaches do you think would be most appropriate and why?

**I have concerns regarding the accuracy of recreational catch data when it comes to recreational fisher folk. I believe separating the for-hire Sector from the recreational Sector will support better data. I believe that once a for-hire sector is formed additional criteria in reporting can be added. I believe there will be great accuracy on catch data from the for-hire sector if separated. Also the objectives of this amendment should be to support the growth of the for-hire sector and establish a stable, profitable business model that encourages new active participants. This will in turn support local economies and provide suitable and attractive catch limits to bolster the for-hire business for their clients and our citizens.**

If sector separation is pursued, should the Council and Commission consider setting limits on the ability to obtain or retain federal for-hire permits? (e.g., restrictions on the number of permits available, additional permit criteria or requirements, limits on the ability to temporarily drop and re-apply for these permits, etc.)

**I don't fully endorse limited access and do not support restrictions on the number of permits issued. I believe new entries should have the opportunity to join the fishery, but with that being said I do believe that inactive permits and those permits with no reporting should be placed on a probationary period until they are active and reporting on their fishing activities. If in a certain time frame they continue to be inactive they should not be granted participation in the for-hire sector. I anticipate that private anglers may transition to the for-hire sector to benefit from favorable regulations as well. Introducing an activity standard with enhanced enforcement of existing catch reporting requirements could provide a solution. As mandatory reporting requirements have long been established, I propose that those who have never reported should be classified as**

**inactive to make room for active new entrants. Also if a for-hire license is inactive for an extended period of time that license should be suspended.**

What else should the Council and Commission consider relative to recreational sector separation?

**It is crucial for the Council and Commission to prioritize preserving and rebuilding the for-hire sector. Recreational anglers who do not want to spend money on a boat and gear, or do not have the time to learn how to use that gear, should still have access to the fishery. The for-hire fleet provides this access to the fisheries and is also important to providing not only enjoyment but a resource for providing sustainable wild caught seafood to clients and their families.**

**When an industry signals distress, action must be taken by our government and its rule makers to assist those small businesses and in turn bolstering economic growth and opportunities for providing sustainable seafood and enjoyment to our citizens. Sector separation through mode management or separate allocations and AMs will help stabilize the industry. This will benefit the entire recreational fishery, ensuring all anglers can fish.**

**In closing I believe there should be three sectors for-hire, commercial, and recreational. All three are vastly different from each other and need to be considered separately when determining rulings by the Commission and States. I believe we will also benefit from separation when it comes to more accurate reporting which will help better manage the species in our waters. Most of all separation will prevent many for-hire (small business) from being regulated out of business which would become an economical issue for many coastal communities. Finally it just makes sense!! The for-hire is not recreational, it's a platform to provide recreational fisher folk the opportunity to use this resource that they should have the rights to benefit from.**

**Sincerely,**

**Captain Jason Howell  
Pamela May Charters**

**From:** [Anthony Castaldi](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** sector separate regulations  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 26, 2025 7:30:05 AM

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My name is Anthony Castaldi and 228 w. lake drive lindenhurst NY. I would like for my comment to be heard regarding the for Hire sector. I am all for the sector separation for the reason being if we lower or limits to the private regs it will definitely have a negative impact on our businesses. thank you

Mid Atlantic Fishery Management  
Comments on Recreational & For Hire .  
Separation.



The United National Fisherman's Association Is OPPOSED to the proposed action.  
By muddying the Data this proposal further creates uncertainty in killing of the RESOURCE!  
For to long NMFS Council Staff & Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
have distorted the data.  
NMFS Council & Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission continue to ignore Magnuson  
2007 requiring a SALT WATER REGISTRY!

WHAT IS THE NUMBER FOR RECREATIONAL FISHERS?

1. FISHING IN EEZ?
2. FISHING IN EACH STATE OF Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council, NEFMC?
3. WHAT IS NUMBER OF FOR HIRE WITH.
  1. STATE FOR HIRE LICENSES
  2. FEDERAL FOR HIRE LICENSES?

BETTER USE OF STAFF TIME!

REGISTERING ALL RECREATIONAL FISHERS IN EEZ!  
REQUIRING USE OF BLUE FIN DATA CELL PHONE REPORTING FOR ALL FISHERS IN EEZ.  
REQUIRING REGISTRATION OF ALL BOATS OR VESSELS IN EEZ.

USE OF BLUE FIN DATA COULD ACCOMPLISH THE ABOVE!

MANAGEMENT COULD CONSIDER TOTAL LENGTH RETENTION FOR ALL  
RECREATIONAL & FOR HIRE VESSELS / FISHERS.

United National Fisherman's Association.  
2/26/2995

**From:** [Chelsea Tuohy](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#); [Tracey Bauer](#); [Hart, Hannah](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Sector separation  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025 11:33:01 AM

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**From:** MIKE SKIRKA <[skirkam@comcast.net](mailto:skirkam@comcast.net)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 27, 2025 7:51 AM  
**To:** G2W2 <[G2W2@asmfc.org](mailto:G2W2@asmfc.org)>  
**Subject:** [External] Sector separation

I oppose sector separation. It amounts to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, whereby certain fishermen will get a temporary advantage while the sinking ship is the declining fish stocks that the government fails to fix. It further solidifies the hierarchy that favors commercial money interests over for-hire money interests over the lowly recreational fisherman.

---

I have been a recreational fisherman for over 50 years.

Mike Skirka  
5 Oakdale Run  
Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716



**From:** [Chelsea Tuohy](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#); [Tracey Bauer](#); [Hart, Hannah](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Comments on Recreational Sector Separation  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025 11:33:21 AM

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Louis Van Bergen

Captain/Operator

Represent Miss Barnegat Light (Party Boat)

Barnegat Light, NJ

We are in favor of sector separation in the fact that our customers are typically not all seasoned anglers with lots of experience. They may make one trip to a few trips a year. Many are happy to just have the experience but, taking home a meal is important to them as well. In the summer of 2023 the slot limit the state of NJ had in place for fluke added our business by giving our customers a better chance at achieving the goal of "bringing their lunch and catching their dinner".

We do believe that more data is key to sustainable fisheries management, but the party boat industry currently supplies a huge amount of RELIABLE data through our mandatory VTRs. Our crew diligently counts keepers and discards of all fish caught on each trip. It has shown us that the ratio of keepers to discards is sickening. Our customers voice their displeasure to us and our only response is "We don't make the rules.". In our area the number of private boat trips and anglers fishing for fluke, sea bass and striped bass far outnumbers the for hire fleet. The data that goes uncollected from each of the private fleet's trips would surely help management.

There has been a shift in my 35 years of working deck and running the Miss Barnegat Light. When I started there were 13 party boats and well over 50 charter boats. The shift from chartering for a day of fishing to owning a boat along with the more stringent regulations has created a narrative of us being the only remaining party boat and the charter fleet has been reduced to about 10 boats. Everyone of these businesses employs multiple people and various other local businesses. As the for hire industry slowly dies what becomes of all these businesses? This could be the difference in survival or extinction of these sector of recreational fishing.

Thank you

Louis Van Bergen

**From:** [G2W2](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#); [Chelsea Tuohy](#)  
**Subject:** FW: [External] Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment Scoping Hearings  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025 11:26:33 AM

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**From:** RomanAround5246 <[romanaround5246@gmail.com](mailto:romanaround5246@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 28, 2025 6:33 AM  
**To:** G2W2 <[G2W2@asmfc.org](mailto:G2W2@asmfc.org)>  
**Subject:** [External] Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment Scoping Hearings

Hi Kiley,

I would like to Thank You for giving me this opportunity to voice my thoughts and opinion. I think that it is unfair that Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts don't have a voice on this Council. I get tired of fishing in Long Island Sound for a species that has different regulations(size limit and daily bag limit) between two states. After all, these species are prevalent in our waters and all regions that have them should get a say in the management of these species.

I do believe there should be a Sector Separation because in my eyes they are different in that both have different needs and reasons. The for-hire group needs to put fish in the box for paying anglers and recreational anglers want to justify their costs(license, fuel bait).

I also think that you have been a little favoring to the Commercial Sector over the years with a better portion of the allocations of the quota and I think this needs to be addressed with this Management Issue. The Commercial Sector is out to make money after paying bills and so is the For-Hire Sector. They are in it for the same reason, pay to fish.

If we go with Sector Separation, the Commercial and Recreational(anglers) Sector should have to give up a share of their allocations but the Recreational (anglers) should give up more. This way, everyone has their limits to with and from. This should be a group involved conversation and not one sided.

As for data collection, it's going to be hard to get the Recreational Anglers to do it.

I believe there should be a limit on permits for both the Commercial and Recreational Sector on how many vessels there are. Having to readjust quotas and allocations because the numbers of boats increase will always be a problem because no one wants to give anything up. But in order to make the Sector Separation work, we will need to do it only at the beginning of this process. Everyone will have to make a sacrifice.

As for data collection, there are apps out there that anglers can use. Here in Connecticut, we have the Volunteer Angler Survey with can be done in a paper form(logbook) or digital(on-line). I would make it a choice for anglers but make it perfectly clear that the numbers used from

these two options will be used for harvest numbers. If they want to complain about it, they will have to look at themselves and fellow anglers for not participating and start participating in it. It was revealed that the numbers used in MIRP data were over estimated by thirty to fortypercent. There is a flaw in all the reporting processes. For instance, during the webinar meeting the Party Boat members stated that all there numbers needed to be in before they hit the dock. I find it hard to believe that the Party Boat is accounting for what each individual caught on the trip. In the trips that I have made in the past on many different boats, no one came to ask me how many scup I caught? Or Black Sea Bass? Or Fluke? Or Bluefish? The only ones who have a true reporting are the six-pack Charter Boats because they only have to keep track of six anglers and not twenty? Or thirty? Or sixty?

It's never going to be a perfect system in anyone's eyes or reality, but we must realize that we are in this together. Yes, we do have different groups that fish for different reasons. No one is going to get exactly what they want but we can make it work, give a little here and take a little there. Yes, we need Sector Separation but it goes beyond just the Recreational Sector. We all need to make sacrifices and I hope the Committee sees that and brings us all in for opinions. We definitely need a better way of collecting data and we should use the tools available to do it. And if people don't want to use them then they get what comes from the people who do. We should also get a say on the Board and in order to do that, you need to make the sacrifice of getting all the states that are affected have a say.

Thank You for giving me this opportunity to voice my opinion and give my suggestions. If people are willing to work together this won't be a battle. But if not, we will still be debating this in another five years.

Sincerely,

Roman Dudus

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy Z Flip3 5G, an AT&T 5G smartphone

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**From:** [Charlie Laurens](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment regarding sector separation for flounder, scup, black sea bass  
**Date:** Saturday, March 1, 2025 2:47:33 PM

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You don't often get email from clarens0326@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Charles Laurens and I am a Headboat captain for Rudee Tours out of Virginia Beach, VA. We target Black Sea Bass and Flounder on many of the trips we run and depend on them for a significant portion of our business. In recent years the increase in recreational effort and catch has affected our bag limits and seasons which has had an impact on our income. We are in support of sector separation for headboat, for hire and private sectors for flounder, scup, and black sea bass. We feel that the VTRs we submit could be used in a way that would provide a more accurate measure of what we are catching. If we are required to report what we catch, and fisheries managers know exactly what we catch, our regulations should be a direct representation of that and we should not have to pay for the erroneous data that is collected from private vessels. We also believe that it should be mandatory for private vessels to report what they catch as well.

Thank you

**From:** [msterling4041@gmail.com](mailto:msterling4041@gmail.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment regarding sector separation for sea bass,scup and flounder  
**Date:** Saturday, March 1, 2025 2:23:21 PM

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My name is Mark Sterling and I work for Rudee Tours and run the Rudee Angler out of Virginia Beach,VA. We run a fleet of 5 headboats and have been in favor of sector separation for years. I feel like this would be the fairest way to move forward in this fishery. I also feel that there should be mandatory reporting for everyone participating in this fishery. This would give an accurate survey of what is being caught. We have been reporting our catch for years along with most of the for hire industry.



**NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF  
DIVERS AND CLUBS**  
526 S. Riverside Drive  
Neptune, NJ 07753  
[www.scubanj.org](http://www.scubanj.org)



3/2/25

TESTIMONY - RECREATIONAL SECTOR SEPERATION & DATA COLLECTION

1. The NJ Council of Divers and Clubs (NJCD&C - previously NJ Council of Diving Clubs) is an organization of 14 sport diving clubs, several dive shops, and numerous individual sport divers. Our organization takes the following position regarding the scoping document for Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection.

The NJCD&C does not favor sector separation within the recreational fishery. If the ASMFC or Mid Atlantic Council wants to use this just as an internal tool for better understanding of the recreational fishery, we would have no objection. However, the NJCD&C is adamantly against separate allocations, bag limits, seasons or ACLs within the recreational fishery. All recreational fishermen fishing either from private boats, party boats, or from shore should be under the same rules. Separate rules within the recreational fishery would only cause conflicts and confusion within the fishery. On page five the statement was made that this approach would cause substantially increased administrative costs, yet another negative with a federal administration that's looking to cost cutting.

2. Regarding recreational data collection, the NJCD&C believes that voluntary reporting on catches could contribute to better data, especially with the multitude of private fishing vessels. Voluntary in preference to mandatory as recreational fishermen that want to report are more likely to take the time to report accurately. Remember, recreational fishermen are not fishery scientists or fishery managers. In designing a reporting form for voluntary reporting, fishery managers need to keep it simple, such as what species, number, length, date and no more. Fishery managers also need to remember that not all recreational fishermen have access to electronic reporting equipment, such as computers, so a simple tally sheet should also exist. Also, don't expect overly frequent reporting from recreational fishermen, who go fishing for recreation and not to fill out tedious forms.
3. Finally, remember that sport divers and spearfishermen do not use hook and line, but do have the advantage of being able to observe fish in their natural environment. So maybe an option to make a comment on significant observations.

Respectfully,

Jack Fullmer

Legislative Committee

Dr. Chris Moore, Executive Director

March 4, 2025

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

800 North State Street, Suite 201

Dover, DE 19901

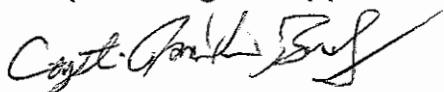
Dear Dr. Moore,

I would like to offer my personal observations regarding the potential amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish to add a Recreational Sector Separation of Data Reporting.

My opinions are based upon over 60 years of direct participation in these fisheries both as a recreational angler and a for-hire charter captain.

I am just as frustrated as many others are with the overall inconsistencies or outcomes related to the current attempts at managing our shared marine resources. However, I do not feel that merely acquiring a larger data set will lead to a significant improvement. In this case it is imperative that only the highest quality data be used to make such critical decisions.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any further questions. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Capt. Michael Bady", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Captain Michael Bady

Captain's Table Charters

Greenport, NY 11901

516-317-5423 cell

racerock166@aol.com

## Recreational Sector Separation/Data Reporting

I would vote in favor of this proposed separation for the following reasons:

- 1) Reporting Concerns
  - a. Highly unlikely recreational sector will report in a timely and accurate fashion.
  - b. Increased amounts of questionable data will make for even more confused regulatory process; a wider sample from anglers with less experience can lead to skewed numbers further harming the for-hire industry.
  - c. Huge investment in enforcement methods to obtain compliance from recreational anglers is likely to increase resistance to the program; very costly!
- 2) If Separation is Implemented
  - a. Limit ability for new federal and state permits based permits based upon percentage of total annual income; **existing permits must be "grandfathered"**.
  - b. Limit ability to drop and re-apply such permits
  - c. **Do not use Recreational data as part of the rule making process when establishing size and bag limits for the for-hire industry.**
- 3) Reporting Improvements for Recreational Sector
  - a. Increase dockside surveys
  - b. Offer incentives to recreational anglers to have an Observer ride with them on occasion, i.e. pay for fuel and bait expense for the day.
- 4) Overall Solution
  - a. The for-hire segment has a large financial investment in the overall costs of running their businesses. Commercial harvesters using nets, longlines, pots, etc. have regulations are adjusted to reflect their specific needs. **The for-hire industry also needs its own set of less restrictive regulations across all species to maintain the health of their businesses as compared to the recreational community.**



- b. Fisheries managers need to ride with experienced members of the commercial and for-hire industries to collect the most accurate data.
- c. Using research vessels with limited knowledge of where to find and how to harvest the species in question have led to largely inaccurate estimates and subsequent poor management decisions
- d. Take surveys over a wider range of waters to obtain more statistically accurate data. While a baseline tow may be necessary for some statistical accuracy, fish do not always return to the exact same location year after year.

**From:** [Miss Montauk](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 4, 2025 11:24:54 AM

---

You don't often get email from captjamie@missmontauk.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Re: Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection

My name is Jamie Quaresimo, from the the for-hire head boat Miss Montauk II. I am in favor of Sector Separation by Mode.

- Jamie Quaresimo, Montauk NY

**From:** [Miss Montauk](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 4, 2025 11:23:29 AM

---

You don't often get email from jashanty@optonline.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

Re: Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection

My name is Sharon Quaresimo, from the the for-hire head boat Miss Montauk II. I am in favor of Sector Separation by Mode.

- Sharon Quaresimo, Montauk NY

**From:** [David Policansky](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational sector separation and data collection  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025 3:17:29 PM

---

You don't often get email from davidpolicansky@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Kiley Dancy:

Of course the for-hire sector should be separated from the recreational sector for data collection and management. The for-hire sector is a branch of the commercial sector. Charter-boat and party-boat operators are commercial fishers in every way. They might not sell fish, although some do, but they make their living through fishing. They are exploiting the resource for financial gain. In many cases, especially for party boats, clients keep fish. Even if their clients don't keep fish, there is hooking mortality, which can be substantial for some fish species at some places and times, and never approaches zero.

So yes, please, classify the for-hire sector as commercial, starting as soon as possible. And continue to manage and collect data on recreational fishing. Anglers can have large impacts on fish populations and on the environment.

David Policansky  
202-213-8930  
[davidpolicansky@gmail.com](mailto:davidpolicansky@gmail.com)

**From:** [smachalaba@aol.com](mailto:smachalaba@aol.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [members@hi-mar.com](mailto:members@hi-mar.com)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 5, 2025 4:08:37 PM

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You don't often get email from smachalaba@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Ms. Kiley Dancy:

These comments are being submitted on behalf of the Hi-Mar Striper Club of Middletown, Monmouth County, New Jersey. The 65 members of Hi-Mar Striper are opposed to Recreational Sector Separation. Sector separation for recreational fisheries will not produce any benefit to conservation; It will make regulation setting, management and enforcement more difficult and end up pitting one group of recreation fisherman (i.e. boat fisherman vs. land based fisherman) against one another.

MAFMC and ASMFC need to focus on improving data collection. This will allow better management of fish species. The webinar meeting that I participated in on February 25, 2025 did not address proposals or methods to improve data collection.

Stephen Machalaba,  
Hi-Mar Striper Club

**From:** [michael.sornberger](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:29:09 PM

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[You don't often get email from m.sornberger@hotmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

My name is Michael Sornberger and I am a First mate with over 30 yrs of experience on the Laura Lee Express. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.  
Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [JBaseball31](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:30:28 PM

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You don't often get email from james242355@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Please enter your information into the blank spaces and email a submission to:

[kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org)

My name is James Baldo and I am a mate on captree pride. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

**From:** [Capt. Joe DeVito](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 8:38:53 PM

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[You don't often get email from captaindevito@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Captree Boatman's Association is in favor of sector separation for the party charter industry. We are in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. We are in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs. Overall, the boats in our fleet take about 130,000 people fishing annually and they would greatly appreciate sector separation.

Captain Joseph DeVito  
Executive Director  
Captree Boatman's Association

**From:** [Nick Hubbard](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Sector separation  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 10:04:49 PM

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You don't often get email from nick24hubbard@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Nicholas Hubbard and I am a mate on the Laura Lee Fleet. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.



**From:** [Troy Merkle](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Separate measures  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:30:59 PM

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[You don't often get email from troymerkle889@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

My name is Troy Merkle and I am a mate) on Captree Pride. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs. TM

**From:** [Samantha Keresztes](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:58:54 PM

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You don't often get email from samker27@icloud.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Samantha Keresztes and I am a mate on the Laura Lee Fleet. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Thank you  
-Samantha Keresztes

**From:** [Ryan T](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Regs Separation  
**Date:** Thursday, March 6, 2025 9:30:57 PM

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You don't often get email from rtouhy@icloud.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Ryan Touhy and I am a mate on the Captree Pride. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

**From:** [Patrick Stryka](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** REGS  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025 8:51:31 AM

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You don't often get email from patrickstryka@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is \_Patrick Stryka\_\_\_\_\_ (name) and I am a \_captain\_\_\_\_\_ (mate or captain) on Captree Princess\_\_\_\_\_ (name of vessel). I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

**From:** [James Andresen](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Sector regulation  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025 6:50:01 AM

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You don't often get email from andresejames@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Sent from my iPhone Please enter your information into the blank spaces and email a submission to:

kdancy@mafmc.org

My name is James Andresen and I am a Captain on the Laura lee. I am in favor of sector separation for the party charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

**From:** [Matt Catoir](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025 5:22:50 PM

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You don't often get email from mattcatoir@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Matthew Catoir and I am a mate/captain on the Captree Pride. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [richard.klein58@yahoo.com](mailto:richard.klein58@yahoo.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Sector Separation  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2025 11:03:29 AM

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[You don't often get email from richard.klein58@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

kdancy@mafmc.org

My name is Richard Klein and I am a captain on the Laura Lee Fleet. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [larry bernocco](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Please enter your information into the blank spaces and email a submission to: kdancy@mafmc.org My name is Larry Bernocco and I am a Captain on the Island Spirit . I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of ...  
**Date:** Saturday, March 8, 2025 6:38:14 PM

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[You don't often get email from la13fish@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Sent from my iPhone



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## SECTOR SEPARATION

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From ANTHONY GUADAGNINO <dadstoy223@yahoo.com>

Date Sat 3/8/2025 3:53 PM

TO: DR. C. MOORE

EXEC. DIRECTOR M.A.F.M.C.

SIR.

IN RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION CONCERNING "SECTOR SEPARATION" OF WHICH I AM **NOT** IN FAVOR OF. I BELIEVE BOTH RECREATIONAL FISHING GROUPS SHOULD BE TREATED SIMILARLY. THOSE THAT FISH ON HEAD BOATS HAVE THE COST OF A DAYS FISHING & PRIVATE BOAT FISHERMAN ALSO HAVE EXPENSES, IE. BOAT REPAIRS. INSURANCE, FUEL, BAIT ETC. ALL OF WHICH HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON OUR ECONOMY. I WOULD GUESS THE "RECREATIONAL PRIVATE BOAT" FISHERY HAS A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON OUR ECONOMY VS THE "HEAD BOAT" FISHERY. SECTOR SEPARATION AWARDS THE FOR HIRE FISHERY 5 BLUEFISH PER DAY VS. 3 FOR US. I WOULD EXPECT THAT THE DISTRIBUTION OF ALLOCATIONS WOULD BE THE SAME FOR SEABASS, PORGY, FLUKE ETC. AS A MEMBER OF THE "FISHHAWKS SALTWATER ANGLERS CLUB" OF WHICH I AM THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, I OPPOSE SECTOR SEPARATION.

TONY GUADAGNINO {CFO}

FISH HAWKS SALTWATER ANGLERS CLUB

**From:** [Kyle White](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Flounder, Black Sea Bass, and Scup public comment  
**Date:** Saturday, March 8, 2025 10:33:45 AM

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[You don't often get email from [kylewht02@gmail.com](mailto:kylewht02@gmail.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Hello, my name is Kyle White and I work for and operate headboard for Rudee Tours out of Virginia Beach. Sea Bass and Flounder are two of our major sources of income and we heavily rely on these species for much of our business. I am strongly in favor of sector separation being implemented as a management strategy for these two species. In recent years small boat charters and private recreational fishing has exploded in this area and has most definitely impacted our business. We are required to submit VTRs for all of our trips and as far as we know the smaller vessels have run almost completely unchecked as far as how much stock they are removing from the biomass. I believe that implementing sector separation for Sea Bass and Flounder and making mandatory reporting for all recreational fishing would greatly improve the baseline knowledge of what we have here in Virginia as well as help us better grasp our ACL for all species.

I appreciate all the time and effort you have put into this topic and look forward to the AP meeting coming this week.

Best,  
Kyle White

**From:** [Bryan Sorice](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** 2025 Saltwater Regs  
**Date:** Sunday, March 9, 2025 4:32:45 PM

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You don't often get email from cptbryan@islandprincesscaptree.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Bryan Sorice and I am an Owner / Captain on the ISLAND PRINCESS. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Thank you,  
Captain Bryan

The IP - Island Princess Fishing Captree  
IslandPrincessCaptree.com • 631-587-6024

**From:** [Dave P](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Sunday, March 9, 2025 1:02:10 PM

---

You don't often get email from dprilook@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is dave and work in the for-hire sector. We support separation with mode management

**From:** [Kevin Austin](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Sector Separation  
**Date:** Sunday, March 9, 2025 4:48:11 PM

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You don't often get email from hnstkev@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Kevin Austin and I am a mate or captain on Island Princess and Bay Princess out of Captree State Park in New York . I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kevin Austin  
[Hnstkev@gmail.com](mailto:Hnstkev@gmail.com)



## FISHHAWKS SALTWATER ANGLERS CLUB

March 10, 2025

Dr. Christopher Moore

Executive Director, MAFMC

Dr. Moore,

I am a member of the Fish Hawks Saltwater Anglers Club, and I DO NOT SUPPORT Sector Separation. There should NOT be any distinction between the Private Recreational and For-Hires Sectors.

Sincerely,

*George Royston, Secretary*

George Royston, Secretary

Fish Hawks Saltwater Anglers Club



6 Resnik Road, Suite 208  
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Capt. John Richardson

March 11, 2025

Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director,  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, Delaware 19901

### **RE: Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection**

Dear Dr. Moore:

On behalf of the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association (“SBCBA”) whose membership includes the for hire fleet and recreational anglers, recommendations and comments associated with Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection is detailed below.

### **Issue 1 - Potential Management Approaches**

- Do you believe recreational sector separation should be explored for these fisheries? Why or why not?
- Which sector separation approaches do you think would be most appropriate and why?
- If sector separation is pursued, should the Council and Commission consider setting limits on the ability to obtain or retain for-hire permits?
- What else should be considered relative to recreational sector separation?

***The SBCBA does not recommend sector separation at this time until the MRIP Pilot Fishing Survey is completed in 2026 and additional data collection is conducted for the private recreational angler and for hire fleet to reduce MRIP uncertainty as set forth in Issue 2 detailed below.***

***Mode management is recommended consistent with the Magnuson Stevenson Act (“MSA”), National Standard (“NS”) 4 and 8, allocations shall be fair and equitable to each user type and take into consideration the economic impact of the sustained participation by the user types.***

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*The SBCBA recommends mode management that is already in use for select species. Mode management should consider:*

- *Private recreational angler and for hire modes; and*
- *Private shore side recreational angler, private boater, OUPV/6 pack for hire vessel and Party Boat vessel modes.*

*For example there is mandatory reporting for bluefin tuna catch with seasons and bag limits for different mode and/or user types that include private recreational vessel, charter head boat OUPV/6Pack vessel, party boat vessel and different commercial gear types. The permit is associated with the vessel. Mode management takes into consideration the different goals and objectives of each mode and the need for seasons and bag limits that are necessary to run and operate an economically viable for hire or commercial operation.*

*The for hire fleet provides a mechanism for the public to be provided access to the fishery. The for hire fleet is the bus providing recreational anglers access to the fishery that would not be possible for those that do not have the time to learn to or fish from the shore or from a vessel nor have the economic ability to own and operate their own vessel. As a result, the public will not book a for hire trip if the price does not reflect a reasonable bag limit. If such is the case the public will not book a trip in turn not providing the public access to the fishery. With the increased cost of fuel, boat expenses, tackle etc., the for hire fleet is a timely and cost effective means for the recreational community to have access to the fishery.*

*With increased water temperatures as the season progresses, fish move into deeper and cooler waters to the detriment of the shore side angler. Many shore side anglers cannot afford a private vessel. As a result the for hire fleet is a cost effective mechanism providing access to the fishery especially for those less economically disadvantaged anglers that rely on these species to feed their family and fill the ice box. With the increased cost of fuel, boat expenses, tackle etc., the for hire fleet is a timely and cost effective means for the recreational community to have access to the fishery.*

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***Ongoing trends have indicated that the fore hire fleet numbers and participation has reduced over time as a result limited access is not recommended.***

**Issue 2 - Recreational Data Collection**

- Recreational catch estimation is inherently difficult: open access, millions of trips/anglers, varying behavior, no reporting requirements for private anglers
- Concerns related to the accuracy, precision, and variability of MRIP data; lack of angler confidence in data
- Interest in exploring options to improve/supplement data for these species

***Federally permitted for hire vessels are required to complete eVTRs to document catch as well as did not fish reporting. The SBCBA recommends that state permitted for hire vessels that don't fish in federal waters and are presently not subject to mandatory reporting via eVTR also complete eVTRs. This will improve the MRIP data set and reduce MRIP uncertainty.***

***The SBCBA and Rhode Island Party & Charter Boat Association are presently participating in a Recreational Bio Project where select captains are measuring and photographing the lengths of cod caught and released and utilizing a mobile app to submit this and other data to the ACCSP for use of the data for fishery management purposes. Such needs to be considered for use by the for hire fleet for the species of concern to provide evidence of fish caught and released to reduce uncertainty with MRIP for hire catch and improve the management of our fishery stocks.***

***The use of similar mobile apps associated with the Recreational Bio Project should also be considered for the private recreational angler, the rationale for such use is detailed above. There are presently many recreational mobile apps in use by the public but they are not approved by the ACCSP for use for fishery management purposes and the data is not confidential.***

***SBCBA recommends consideration of the use of mobile apps to document fish caught and release associated with fishing competitions or tournaments that award prizes for the largest fish consistent with the***

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*rationale above. Locally there are examples of the public's appetite to report the fish they catch and/or release with prizes being awarded with ongoing competitions annually by On The Water and The Fishermen magazines, Martha Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Tournament and MassDMF Saltwater Fishing Derby and Citizen Science Striped Bass project. Provide a mobile app that can report the data for use for fishery management purposes that maintains the confidentiality of the data and promotes reporting to reduce uncertainty with MRIP recreational catch and improve the management of our fishery stocks.*

*There are multiple examples of mandatory reporting by tournaments and significant money being awarded associated with the catch and release of pelagics (ex. White marlin, bluefin tuna, etc) up and down the coast that in many cases include scientist being present to collect measurements and data, otoliths or DNA samples to provide the science necessary to better manage the fishery.*

*There are also ongoing problems with MRIP data as a result of the present method used when conducting recreational dockside intercepts that needs to be changed to include the general location for a fishing trip. These intercepts presently record the location of the interview but not the location fish were caught or released.*

*Presently dockside intercepts record the location of an angler interview but not where their fish were landed and/or released. Recording the general fishing location for recreational fishing trips (e.g., identifying the 10-minute square of latitude, longitude – a 100 square mile area), would provide much needed spatial information for the recreational fishery that is on par with what is collected for commercial fisheries.*

*Understanding area fished will greatly help assigning catch to the appropriate stock for species with multiple stocks (e.g., Atlantic cod, haddock, red hake, winter flounder, black sea bass, tautog).*

*For several species, release mortality is significantly associated with variables like depth and/or temperature. The lack of spatial data for the recreational fishery prevents accounting for these variables when calculating removals, which introduces a major source of uncertainty in assessment and management. Marine Spatial planning that is needed due to proposed wind turbine projects and offshore aquaculture suffer*

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*from lack of spatial data on recreational fishing in New England, east coast and the Gulf of Mexico. This will better define the spatial extent of recreational catch in these areas.*

*Quota transfers between the commercial and recreational sector is not permitted for the species of concern other than for bluefish such needs to be allowed to provide the public access to an underutilized resource that has achieved Maximum Sustainable Yield ("MSY") or Optimum Yield ("OY"). Access to and use of the species of concern that has achieved MSP or OY is consistent with NS 1 that is presently not the case and needs to be revised accordingly. The species of concern are in general targeted by the recreational community to put food on the plate for the dinner table. The SBCBA recommends to allow for annual quota transfers between sectors as an after season accounting exercise to provide access to the resource consistent with NS 1.*

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter. If you have any questions or comments, please contact the SBCBA at the email below.

Very truly yours,

*Capt Mike Pierdinock*

Capt. Mike Pierdinock  
SBCBA, President  
[sbcbamp@gmail.com](mailto:sbcbamp@gmail.com)

*Capt Timothy Brady*

Capt. Timothy Brady  
SBCBA, Vice President  
[sbcbaofficers@gmail.com](mailto:sbcbaofficers@gmail.com)

*William Hatch*

Capt. William Hatch  
SBCBA, Board of Directors  
[machacafishing@gmail.com](mailto:machacafishing@gmail.com)

*Stacie Delzingo*

Stacie Delzingo  
SBCBA, Secretary  
[stacie9229@gmail.com](mailto:stacie9229@gmail.com)

*Tom Depersia*

Capt. Tom Depersia  
SBCBA, Founding President & Trustee  
[hugetuna@aol.com](mailto:hugetuna@aol.com)

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*Capt Rob Savino*

Capt. Rob Savino  
SBCBA, Trustee  
[robsavino@mac.com](mailto:robsavino@mac.com)

*Capt Paul Diggins*

Capt. Paul Diggins  
SBCBA, Trustee  
[captain\\_paul@bostonfishing.com](mailto:captain_paul@bostonfishing.com)

*Capt Mike Delzingo*

Capt. Mike Delzingo  
SBCBA, Board of Directors  
[ff\\_boston@yahoo.com](mailto:ff_boston@yahoo.com)

cc: Michael Pentony, GARFO  
Travis Ford, GARFO  
Russ Dunn, NMFS  
Dan McKiernan, MassDMF  
Tom O'Shea, MassF&G  
Ray Kane, MassFAC

---

**From:** [Paul Keppel](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fish reg  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 11, 2025 7:45:51 AM

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[You don't often get email from pkeppel1192@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Sent from my iPhone. You people collect so called data from fishermen assuming they all know how to catch a particular species! Garbage science from the get go!!!!

**From:** [Scott Smyth](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Fishing  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 11, 2025 7:35:16 AM

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You don't often get email from ssmyth1515@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Nicholas Smyth(name) and I am a mate(mate or captain) on Laura Lee(name of vessel). I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

Thank you,  
Nicholas Smyth  
631-513-1442

**From:** [Brian Marks](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 12, 2025 6:44:09 PM

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[You don't often get email from bkm072@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

As 70 year old fishing for 50 years a few comments. The regs always get worse never better WHY? Bait and tackle stores are closing none opening. WHY? Marine fuel harder and harder to find. WHY? I live on the east river seeing less boats every year. WHY. If the goal is to wipe out our hobby and life style keep up the good work and check out the charter business in places like Montauk. Suffering. WHY? HUMANS ARE ALSO A RESOURCE

**From:** [flukeman@aol.com](mailto:flukeman@aol.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Friday, March 14, 2025 12:25:19 PM

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You don't often get email from flukeman@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Let us stop moving the deckchairs on the Titanic and focus the resources on rebuilding the Stocks. I am specifically interested in Summer Flounder, two decades and methodology used by management HAS NOT worked.

I suggest reducing discards by:

- a) Commercially- Return to 13" minimum size.
- b) Recreationally- Require 7/0 hook for Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass AND STOP "catch and release fishing". The two following options have been proposed by advisors for a decade with no other options on the table it seems that one should be chosen to be implemented.

Length retention limit, such as 45 inch and QUIT FISHING FOR THAT SPECIES...OR

Number of fish caught limit, such as 3 fish and QUIT FISHING FOR THAT SPECIES.





**MONTAUK BOATMEN AND CAPTAINS ASSOCIATION**

**P.O. Box 2328**

**Montauk, New York 11954**

[montaukcaptains@gmail.com](mailto:montaukcaptains@gmail.com)

[www.montaukcaptains.org](http://www.montaukcaptains.org)

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March 16, 2025

Ms. Kiley Dancy  
Fishing Management Specialist  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
[kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org)

**Subject: Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection**

Dear Ms. Dancy –

I participated in the February 26 scoping session and spoke on behalf of my own business, November Rain Charters, an inspected/multi-passenger charter boat operating out of Montauk, New York.

As a follow-up to those scoping sessions, I am now writing on behalf of the Montauk Boatman and Captains Association (the “MBCA”). The MBCA represents more than 80 members spanning the commercial and for-hire fishing fleet, recreational and shore anglers, marinas and tackle shops, as well as other businesses in the local marine industry.

The MBCA’s mission is to protect our fisheries by promoting sustainable fishing practices, helping ensure fair regulations, and preserving Montauk’s rich maritime heritage. We are committed to sustaining our strong fishing community by providing resources, education and advocacy to support the livelihood of those who depend on our waters. Through collaboration and proactive engagement, we strive to safeguard the future of Montauk’s fishing industry for generations to come.

We thank you for allowing us to submit this statement and outline below our position regarding sector separation and data collection.

**I. As it relates to Sector Separation, the MBCA is strongly in favor of Sector Separation, via Mode Management/Mode Split. We are opposed to any quota or allocation at this time.**

As an organization that represents and supports for-hire captains and recreational/private anglers, we understand the importance of fair and equitable regulations for all. However, there are vast differences between these two groups, and regulations that account for those differences are appropriate.

As I shared during the scoping session, for-hire captains are held to a strict set of standards that simply do not apply to private anglers. To name just a few:

- For-hire captains require credentialing by the United States Coast Guard, awarded only after proven experience, education and successful assessment results.
- We must carry higher limits of insurance coverage to protect those who fish on our vessels.
- We must satisfy defined safety standards and invest in safety equipment.
- Licensed captains must be part of a drug consortium, subjecting us to random drug testing.
- For inspected vessels, those carrying more than 6 passengers, many of the above requirements go one step further, including annual inspections with the US Coast Guard, and additional safety standards and equipment.
- For-hire vessels require fishing permits, often at both the state and federal levels. These can be costly, exceeding \$1,000 every season depending on where a vessel is fishing. As it relates to our own members, we have access to waters not only in New York, but also Connecticut and Rhode Island, and we therefore satisfy those states' requirements as well as our own.
- We must submit eVTRs for every single trip we operate and are expected to have them at least partially completed before our boats return to the dock. In Montauk, we are often greeted by NYS DEC Officers requesting to see our reports upon our return.

We make these investments in time and money in order to operate our businesses. However, these requirements extend far beyond what recreational anglers are subject to.

I would also like to remind you that certain regulations already account for the differences between for-hire and private anglers. Currently, party and charter boats are subject to different (and more advantageous) bag limits for scup and bluefish, as example. Additionally, it was only two years ago when we were discussing a mode split for striped bass, allowing a more generous slot size for anglers aboard for-hire vessels. Although not approved, the simple fact that it was under consideration demonstrates that there are recognizable differences between for-hire vessels and private anglers. Additionally, as I'm sure you will recall, a potential mode split for the for-hire fleet was shown to have an inconsequential impact on the fishery given the fleet's overall size when compared to recreational anglers. We feel that data will mirror the results seen for the scup, sea bass and fluke fisheries under a sector separation with mode split approach.

Further, in response to your question about limiting federal for-hire permits, the MBCA is not in favor of this measure. Our mission is to support the current generation of captains and anglers, as well as ensure there is opportunity for our future captains to enter and be successful in the for-hire industry. However, we expect that some private anglers will transition to the for-hire sector solely for the benefit of more favorable regulations, without regard for the responsibility that comes along with operating a party or charter boat. Therefore, we are in favor of measures that demonstrate an increased commitment for active and new entrants, including a higher cost to purchase a federal

permit, requiring proof of appropriate insurance, and completion of some type of safety program, as examples. An additional measure that could be taken, along with any of the previous mentioned, would be to assess latent permits – those where permit holders are not reporting – as this could help identify individuals who do not deserve to hold a permit (whether that be current or newer entrants in the for-hire industry). The MBCA would welcome an opportunity to be part of this discussion.

The Council and Commission should focus on preserving and rebuilding the for-hire sector. Recreational anglers without boats or gear should still access the fishery, which the for-hire fleet provides. When this industry faces distress, prompt action is needed. Sector separation through mode management will stabilize the industry and benefit all anglers.

**II. As it relates to Data Collection, this, of course, has continued to be a sore point for many, particularly in the for-hire industry. The MBCA supports the following:**

- Heavier reliance upon the VTRs submitted by party and charter boats. Reliance upon MRIP data has already proven to be problematic and, unfortunately, also incredibly unfair to the party and charter boat industry. Professional captains are required to submit this data and we abide by those mandates. The data we provide is extensive and includes: the date and time of our trips; the areas in which we fish; the mode by which we harvest fish; the species caught; and catch and release counts, as well as the reason for discards. We do not believe more extensive reporting is necessary at this time but do feel strongly that our reports be more thoughtfully considered when proposing regulations.
- Private and shore anglers should be contributing to the essential collection of data that will ultimately be used to set future regulations, including both catch and release counts. No one should be able to harvest from the ocean without accountability for their actions. As you have called out in the scoping document, “[p]rivate anglers...have diverse motivations and varying levels of access to these fisheries, driven largely by individual preferences and circumstances.” However, they are under no obligation to report their catches and therefore face no penalty for not reporting or for inaccurate reporting. Additionally, unfortunately, some private anglers have not made it a point to educate themselves on the size restrictions, bag limits or open seasons for the species they harvest. This is unacceptable and inequitable.
- Furthermore, if there is a possibility of considering sector separation with allocations in the future, we need to introduce a more wholistic approach to capturing data for all catch and release activity, regardless of whether via party or charter boat, private vessel or the shore.

We understand that additional resources would be necessary to implement a recreational data collection program. We also appreciate that things like this do not occur overnight. However, a commitment should be made at this time to pursue this effort. The MBCA would welcome an opportunity to collaborate on how this can be achieved, including through the involvement of our private angler members.

We thank you for taking the time to read this statement and hope you will allow us to continue being part of the discussion moving forward.

Yours sincerely,

*Jill Maganza - Ruiz*

Captain Jill Maganza-Ruiz  
President, Montauk Boatmen and Captains Association

**From:** [rdf@goldeneaglefishing.com](mailto:rdf@goldeneaglefishing.com)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Cc:** [Greg Hueth](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation & Data Collection  
**Date:** Sunday, March 16, 2025 1:17:28 PM

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You don't often get email from [rdf@goldeneaglefishing.com](mailto:rdf@goldeneaglefishing.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

I am the owner of two for-hire fishing boats, the Golden Eagle (906010) which has a capacity of 150 passengers and the Victoria Marie (697828) which has a capacity of six passengers. Both vessels' fish March thru December annually and are subject to RTV's.

I am an advocate of "sector separation" and "mode management" which I believe is the fairest way to allocate any quota. The for-hire boats serve a vast community of people, most of who can only afford to fish once every few weeks at best and many of which are minorities. The recreational boats can fish 6 or 7 days a week if they chose and don't have any reporting requirements regarding their catch.

How is it fair that a for-hire customer, who can only who fish once a **month** (because that is all they can afford) can only keep 10 sea bass at best and a recreational customer fishing daily can keep 70 sea bass a **week**. While the numbers change the same disproportion occurs in each species, fluke, scup, etc.

My understanding of **Magnesium is it's about equity distribution of the resources** and "sector separation" and "mode management" does that. Please support it!

***Capt. Rich Falcone***  
***Goldeneaglefishing.com***  
***732-547-4746***



**RHODE ISLAND**  
**SALTWATER**  
**ANGLERS**  
Association



P.O. Box 1467, Coventry, Rhode Island 02816

401-826-2121

[www.RISAA.org](http://www.RISAA.org)

March 16, 2025

Kiley Dancy  
Mid-Atlantic Marine Fisheries Management Council

via email: [kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org)

**RE:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection

Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) is pleased to provide this comment to the Mid-Atlantic Marine Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC). We represent over 7,500 recreational anglers and 28 affiliated clubs in RI, MA and CT. As stakeholders in marine fisheries issues we are very concerned with the management of fluke, black sea bass, scup and bluefish in RI waters.

We have historically resisted separating the for hire recreational sector from private recreational anglers for many reasons. First, we believe that all recreational anglers should be fishing under the same rules whether you are fishing from shore, from a small boat of your own, or a friend's boat or if you pay someone to fish with them on a charter or party boat. To give preferential treatment to any one of these fishing options seems prejudicial. In addition, estimation of harvest gets more difficult if recreational fishing is divided into more pieces with different regulations.

On a practical side we understand that some groups fish differently at different times of the season and that the for-hire sector relies on income from paying passengers to keep their businesses running. In addition, we appreciate the fact that the for-hire vessels offer an option for many people to get out fishing on a boat if they have no other opportunity. We also see that over the years the for-hire industry has been successful at getting separate regulations in RI and other states that better suit their needs for scup, black sea bass, and tautog. Because of these different regulations for private versus for hire fishers we already have some degree of sector separation.

If the Council does consider a more formal separation of the for hire sector we believe that it will be very important to provide allocations to each sector based on historic catch for those sectors. In past arguments for more liberal regulations the for-hire sector has frequently stated that "because the for-hire harvest is such a small percentage of the recreational catch these liberalizations will not have a significant effect on increasing the total recreational catch". If the for-hire sector believes that they can better regulate so that their historic portion of the recreational harvest works to their benefit then they need to also be subject to additional restrictions in their sector if the separate regulations result in greater harvest than they had in the past. We oppose any additional sector separation if it does not include separate allocation and accountability.

Regarding data collection, RISAA has long been in favor of using electronic data collection to improve data about recreational catch and information about species that are important to recreational fishing. RISAA partnered with Harbor Lights Software to develop the phone app Angler Catch in 2018 through 2020. We believe that phone apps like this as well as angler photos and other angler provided information should all be included to improve data used to determine stock status of recreationally important species and to improve the reliability of recreational catch estimates. Please contact us at any time if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Sincerely,

Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association

*Scott Travers*

Scott Travers, Executive Director

*Rich Hittinger*

Rich Hittinger, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President



March 17, 2025

Kiley Dancy  
Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901  
via email: [kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org)

**Subject: Comments on the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment**

Dear Ms. Dancy,

On behalf of the Viking Marine Group, we appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the Public Information and Scoping Document regarding the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment. The Viking Marine Group, headquartered in New Jersey with facilities in other states along the Atlantic Coast, employs over 2,000 individuals and our operation is directly tied to recreational saltwater fishing. Viking has been designing, building, outfitting, servicing, and maintaining fishing boats for over 60 years. Viking has a vested interest in the management of fisheries important to the recreational sector including species covered by this amendment.

The decision to move forward with an omnibus amendment highlights the ongoing challenges in the management of recreational fisheries, especially when stocks experience high levels of availability. However, these challenges are not rooted in conservation concerns, as most of the fisheries in question, excluding bluefish, have demonstrated sustained rebuilding progress. One of the most obvious challenges is the disconnect between rebuilding success and access and opportunity to those rebuilding stocks. This has the undesirable impact of stunting participation, limiting effort and causing uncertainty for businesses that rely on these species. From a management perspective, these are all serious shortcomings that warrant correction.

**Issue I: Recreational Sector Separation**

We find that there are several missing elements in the scoping document, and they are outlined below.

- **No Clear Problem or Goals**

The document lacks a clear definition of the problem and objectives. MRIP data shows that the distribution of recreational harvest by fishing mode has shifted over time, with a decline in shore-based and for-hire harvests and an increase in private boat harvests for most species. Whether this shift constitutes a problem is unclear and requires clarification to ensure that any action taken in this amendment produces positive outcomes across all modes and does not add to existing challenges.

Viking Marine Group  
5738 N. Route 9  
New Gretna, NJ 08224

Furthermore, without having clear objectives, it's very difficult to track progress and if the goals are being met.

There are two distinct stakeholder groups affected: individual anglers and for-hire operators. The goals for each may differ—anglers seek greater harvest opportunities, while for-hire operators require business flexibility. The amendment must explicitly define its objectives for each mode and the participants within each mode before progressing.

- **Loss of Infrastructure and Workforce**

The ability of for-hire businesses to remain viable is tied to reasonable access to fisheries. In the simplest form, income from fares, which can vary extensively throughout the year due to regulations, need to exceed fixed and operational costs. Regulatory constraints often do not align with business needs. They can have the undesirable effect of limiting operational flexibility making it difficult to cover expenses or retain crew. Addressing this issue is essential to maintaining this critical infrastructure for the recreational fishing community.

- **Differentiating Stakeholder Needs**

There needs to be a clear understanding of the varying needs and objectives within the recreational summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish fisheries. Are we seeking to improve harvest success for anglers among all modes? Are we looking to improve operational flexibility for-hire vessel owners? These objectives may not always align and understanding how to balance both interests is key to effective management.

- **Data and Analysis Recommendations**

Given the lack of data and analysis, we suggest engaging a social scientist or economist to analyze vessel owner and angler perspectives. This work would provide valuable insights into stakeholder priorities. Furthermore, this could help us better understand the various goals among mode participants. The scoping document should include a more detailed breakdown of historical trends in percentage catch and harvest by mode. For example, Figure 1 should present annual data instead of aggregating 2009–2023, allowing for a clearer understanding of long-term trends and comparisons with earlier decades. We believe this exercise would be extremely helpful and should be carried out prior to advancing the amendment.

Specific to the management approaches and questions posed in the document, we offer the following comments.

#### Supported Approaches

- We support providing for-hire vessel owners with greater business flexibility. These vessels are critical infrastructure, offering fishing access to individuals who lack personal boats and serving as an entry point for many lifelong anglers.



- Mode-specific regulations have demonstrated viability in other fisheries, including bluefish, blueline tilefish, and summer flounder (e.g., Island Beach State Park, NJ regulations). Exploring this approach for additional species and modes, for example the for-hire sector, could enhance flexibility for anglers and operators.
- If sector-specific regulations are pursued, they should apply only to federally permitted vessels with defined activity criteria. This would prevent the emergence of loopholes similar to those seen with bluefin tuna and striped bass in certain states. We should be mindful and avoid creating new problems.
- Thus, we are in support of discussing mode-specific management measures which are currently utilized in some federal managed species.

#### Opposed Approaches

- We oppose sub-allocations within the recreational sector. The current recreational harvest limit is already fully utilized, making further sector-specific allocations impractical unless overall allocations are revised. A lack of quota assigned to the recreational sector is one of the underlying causes of many of the lingering management problems. Thus, unless additional poundage is afforded to the recreational sector that reflects the historical importance of these species to the sector, separate allocation for each sector is not a practical pathway forward. It would neither provide the for-hire sector with the flexibility it desires or give private anglers greater access to the resources. Unless allocation is directly linked to a discussion on sector separation, it's will forever be a failed management approach.

#### **Issue II: Recreational Data Collection**

The limitations of recreational data collection have been widely acknowledged for decades. The inherent challenges of capturing accurate recreational catch and effort data stem from the open-access nature of these fisheries and the use of surveys and other monitoring tools that rely on angler recall. Studies have shown that angler recall is inherently inaccurate and should not be used when attempting to monitor recreational catch on a fine geographic or temporal scale. Findings from a 2006 research set aside project and more recently, in the revelation that the order of questions influenced how anglers recall their fishing activity. MRIP is adequate for trends but not for managing to a RHL.

While improving data collection methods is important, the core issue lies in how the data is utilized. MRIP was never designed to provide real-time data, support fine-scale spatial or temporal management, or function as a quota-monitoring tool. Management strategies should acknowledge these limitations rather than attempting to force MRIP into a role it cannot effectively fulfill. This is why we see the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) as such a promising management approach as it tends to focus more on the status of the stock and accounts for MRIP's limitations while still allowing for effective management.

The biggest challenge remains angler recall. Research, including a 2006 research set-aside project and the still under-way NOAA MRIP pilot study, has demonstrated significant variability in angler responses based on question phrasing and survey structure. Given the inherent

inaccuracies in angler recall, management strategies must be designed to accommodate these uncertainties.

Voluntary self-reporting may have value, but it is subject to bias. Collaboration between managers and industry could help expand self-reporting programs to explore more fisheries dependent data.

Tournaments also represent an opportunity for length frequency and other biological information. However, catch and landings associated with tournaments represent a very small fraction of total recreational catch. Yet, since most tournaments gather length and weight information on kept fish, tournaments could be a cost-effective way of assisting states meet monitoring requirements.

### **Summary of Key Points**

We support continued discussion on mode-specific measures but do not support sector-specific allocations unless coupled with a broader review of commercial/recreational allocations. The for-hire sector, particularly the inspected, federally permitted, open head boats, are an important part of the recreational fishing community that provides public access and infrastructure to fisheries. Many of these businesses are struggling at no fault of their own but are the victims of poor management approaches. We should explore ways to afford them and the anglers who fish on those boats, greater flexibility to access these fisheries.

Given the high volume and broad participation in these fisheries, and the fundamental role of harvest as a driver of participation, we believe efforts should focus on improving management approaches like the Harvest Control Rule rather than overhauling the existing recreational data collection program at great expense and little return. Angler recall will also be a limiting factor in realizing significant improvements.

Thank you for considering our comments. We look forward to continued engagement on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John DePersenaire', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John DePersenaire  
Viking Marine Group



# **Jersey Coast Anglers Association**

## **Working for Marine Recreational Anglers**

PO Box 1191, Wall Branch Post Office, Wall, NJ 07719

3/10/25

**ASMFC and MAFMC,**

**Subject: Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment**

JCAA is an association composed of many clubs throughout our state that represents thousands of recreational anglers throughout our state. At a recent meeting, representatives from various clubs discussed Recreational Sector Separation for Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish as well as data collection for recreational anglers.

Our member clubs are **unanimously opposed to sector separation**. We believe that sector separation is unfair. An example of this is the current bluefish regulations. Kids are often introduced to fishing by catching snapper bluefish from the docks of the bay. Traditionally they would bring home a good amount to eat but are now restricted to only keeping three each. On the other hand, customers of the for-hire fleet are allowed to bring home five blues per person. It is far harder to locate and catch bluefish from shore than in a boat. If anything, sector separation should be between boat anglers and shore anglers rather than between the private and for-hire fleets. Another example is fluke. It is far more difficult to catch a legal fluke from shore than from a boat. There are people who can't afford to go out on a boat, who would like to bring fish home to eat. Where is the social justice that NOAA was talking about?

Further, sector separation will create in-fighting amongst the two sectors and they will be less likely to work together on other issues. The document states that the amendment would allow each sector to tailor regulations to their particular needs. What that really means is that the for-hire fleet will receive more favorable regulations than private anglers. We understand they need to earn a living, but so do tackle stores, marinas, and other fishing businesses that depend on private anglers. Having different regulations for the two sectors also creates confusion amongst anglers and makes enforcement more difficult for our law enforcement officers. It will also likely lead to more incidents of non-compliance from angry anglers who believe they are being treated unfairly.

We understand that some states already have separate regulations for the for-hire and private sectors for certain species. It should be the prerogative of the individual states to do so, provided they have the data to develop their regulations through conservation

equivalency. We believe it would be wrong to force sector separation to each of the states that prefer not to have it.

Should sector separation be pursued, we believe that the Council and Commission should not set limits on the ability to obtain or retain federal for-hire permits. Again, this is about fairness. However, our view on this is tied to our belief that the for-hire fleet must have their own quotas if sector separation is adopted. Lastly, we believe that better data is needed before any sector splits are considered.

JCAA has always supported the collection of more accurate data as it would allow our fisheries managers to better manage our fisheries for sustainability. That would result in quotas and regulations being set with more confidence. They would then more likely be accepted by our recreational anglers.

We would like to see some form of catch reporting by private anglers fishing from a boat as well as those fishing from the shore. However, finding a way to collect valid data may prove to be somewhat difficult. Mandatory reporting by private anglers would not be well received and with our law enforcement personnel understaffed in many areas, it would likely not be enforced. Mandatory tournament reporting might be more acceptable. However, the data obtained from tournaments would be skewed as tournament anglers catch far more and far larger fish than the average angler. The same goes for volunteer angler surveys as it is usually the more experienced anglers who submit reports.

You need to find some way to collect reports from the average angler. We have the MRIP program, but their surveys only capture a very small percentage of anglers and in many cases result in very inaccurate data. Doing more in person surveys might help but with the current government cutbacks, there would likely be insufficient manpower to do this. However, possibly volunteers could be used.

Contacting anglers through state registries or saltwater fishing licenses might be feasible. This could be done similarly as to how data is collected for bluefin tuna. Anglers would be selected randomly to participate in the surveys but only for a specific period of time. A user-friendly format for electronic reporting from a phone or computer would probably be the best option. However, this could be supplemented through phone calls, emails or regular mail. Offering a chance at a reward of some sort for participating would be a good incentive. I am sure that many manufacturers would be willing to donate rods, reels and other tackle for this purpose.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Taylor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Taylor, JCAA President



Marc Sherry <marcandlori@gmail.com>

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## AGAINST SECTOR-SEPARATION

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Marc Sherry <marcandlori@gmail.com>  
To: Marc Sherry <marcandlori@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 17 at 8:53 AM

### AGAINST SECTOR-SEPARATION

Dr. Christopher Moore  
Executive Director, MAFMC

I am a member of the Fish Hawk Saltwater Angler Club and I **DO NOT SUPPORT** Sector Separation. I feel it is an **unfair practice**. There should **NOT** be a distinction between the Private Recreational and For-Hire Sectors.

Mickey Sherry  
Fish Hawk Member

**From:** [fishthewizard \(null\)](#)  
**To:** [Dancy, Kiley](#)  
**Subject:** Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 19, 2025 7:37:55 AM

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[You don't often get email from fishthewizard@aol.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

To Whom It May Concern:

While sector separation is a good idea, it will probably prove too difficult to manage. In any case, there should be a limit on charter/party permits issued.

There should be enhanced fore-hire VTR requirements, including state-permitted vessels. Private fisherman could be required to report, though data would still be questionable. Observers and dockside sampling should be used to confirm data reported by for-hire and private anglers.

Joan Berko

## Memo in support of the Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

To: Members of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

From: Philip L Simon

Subject: Support of the Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

Date: March 18, 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am a recreational boat fisherman fishing out of Waretown NJ, and I am a member of three MAMFC advisory panels, including the panel on Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass, as well as the panel on Bluefish. I am also a member of a local fishing club, and the American Fisheries Society. I am basing my support for the amendment process going forward upon the following analysis of the pros and cons of sector separation, and of new approaches for data collection.

### Sector Separation – reasons not to support

1. This is a zero-sum game with winners and losers, and the losers in this case are recreational boat and surf fishermen, the winners are the charter captains and party boats.
2. Private recreational fishermen will likely face a loss of fishing days or reduced keepers or both, as the recreational RHL will now have to be allocated to two separate groups.
3. This introduces yet another “us vs them” factor into the discussions on fishing regulations, adding to the already uncomfortable animosity between the commercial and recreational sectors.
4. This would add another layer of complexity to the regulation setting process as well as the set of regulations the recreational community will have to deal with.
5. At least for New Jersey, this would primarily impact fishing for Summer Flounder, which is already tight. Scup fishing is not a major fishery in NJ, and bluefish are already subject to sector separation under current regulations. And as Black Sea Bass are quite plentiful currently, the allocations probably would not be too impactful, although some changes are likely here as well. So, the battles will be primarily over Summer Flounder and would be highly contentious. Loss of catch in this fishery will have a big impact on the bait and tackle shops, and other business dependent on Summer Flounder private boat and surf fishing, as this is the primary summer fishery in NJ.
6. A significant problem with the amendment as written is that it is hard to judge just what the magnitude and scope of potential changes to RHL allocation are under consideration. Without the specific numbers that could result makes it difficult to support the overall proposal. Hopefully the next version will give us a clear indication of just how much the private sector will be impacted.

### Sector Separation – reasons to support

1. The charter and party boat businesses have been in decline for a number of years, due to the changing demographics of the recreational fishing sector, the increased costs of fuel and crew, and the loss of target species due to a combination of climate factors, environmental decay, and regulatory mismanagement. Help for this sector is needed now.
2. For many recreational fishermen, charter and party boats provide their only access to open water fishing (bay and ocean). The ongoing loss of these businesses that we have witnessed over the last 20 years has reduced fishing opportunities for many people. Several members of my fishing club use charters exclusively, signing up for dozens of trips each season.
3. For me personally, even though I have my own boat, I still go out on 3 to 4 charter trips each season, as I know these captains can find the fish when I can't. It's also nice to have someone else responsible for the boat, the cleanup, and the filleting. Yes, it probably costs me more, but the cost/benefit ratio for me is favorable.
4. My fishing club brings in guest speakers at each monthly meeting from April to October, and many of these speakers are local charter fisherman who are willing to share their techniques and best practices in exchange for exposure to our club membership and the potential to attract new customers. This is a valuable source of fishing knowledge and serves to increase the overall knowledge and enthusiasm of recreational fishermen.
5. For some of us, party boats provide an opportunity to get out fishing when conditions are a little too sporty for small boats, or when the distance to the best fishing grounds is farther than we would like to go in a small one-motor boat. Party boats and large charter boats provide the opportunity for larger groups of families and friends to fish together. My fishing club now organizes three large charters per season, ranging from 10 to 25 members fishing together. Our choice of boats has diminished steadily as the economics of the business model and the restricted harvest limits have reduced both the profitability of the boats and the size of the customer base as the opportunities to bring home a fish have diminished.

Weighing the pros and cons concerning this issue, my reaction is to support sector separation, because I think we need to take care to save the Charter/Party sector from going totally out of existence. Allowing their customers a greater chance to take home a fish should help to support the commercial viability of the sector. But care would be needed to avoid damage to the private sector. Reduced opportunities to fish will impact the businesses that they support, including bait and tackle shops, marinas, boat dealers, fishing publications, and more. And as they say, the devil is in the details, which we cannot see yet.

One piece of the puzzle that comes to mind is redistribution of the Black Sea Bass RHL. The December keeper limit, at least in New Jersey, is quite generous at 15 fish. Most of the private boats are already hauled for the winter, and those of us who still want to bring home these fish usually use a charter or party boat. Maybe this portion of the RHL can be readjusted. Just a thought.

My analysis of the Data Collection portion of this amendment was more straightforward for me. We have been complaining for years, with justification, about the poor data being supplied by MRIP.



It's time for the recreational sector to put up or shut up. We want to ensure that the catch and harvest data reflects what is really going on and is not based on a faulty mail or phone survey that can't provide the necessary accuracy. So, while the data crunchers experiment to find the best approach to this issue, I would recommend a couple of items:

1. Whatever method is chosen, (electronic, written), do not make it mandatory for the first couple of years. Bugs will need to be worked out, changes made.
2. However, to improve compliance, we should set up some kind of positive reward system for filing reports. Maybe a discount for bait and tackle shops, or discounts to fishing magazines?
3. One idea (this is a scoping doc after all) would be for a smart phone-based system, where the fishman creates his report before starting out, and completes it at the conclusion of the trip. IF and when the system is mandatory, this could serve as a daily "license" to fish. I would replace the current Saltwater Registry with this system. It could give you a better picture than MRIP of just who is fishing and what they are catching and keeping.
4. Find an expert on AI and incorporate it into the methodology.
5. Include both catch and discard numbers.
6. You might want to include gear and bait used.
7. Don't fall for the temptation to add a fee to this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the scoping proposal for the amendment.

Phil Simon

Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association  
3419 Virginia Beach Blvd #5029  
Virginia Beach, VA. 23452



March 18, 2025

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

RE: Sector Separation

Dear Commissioner:

The Virginia Saltwater Sportfishing Association surveyed our anglers regarding the Public Information/Scoping Document regarding sector separation. While VSSA supports our charter industry and wants to ensure a viable industry remains to offer anglers a choice for charter fishing, **we do not support sector separation.**

At the heart of the issue is the angler remains the same, the recreational angler, just fishing on a different boat. VSSA supports one set of regulations for all recreational anglers. We don't believe the recreational angler should have different seasons and/or limits just due to the boat they are fishing from. If reductions need to occur then everyone should participate equally.

Regarding data collection, we understand collecting data from the recreational sector is problematic but we do not support mandatory reporting. There is simply no mechanism to force reporting and no easy way to verify what is reported is accurate. Many could try to game the system by under-reporting and there is no way for fishery managers to have any confidence in reports from anglers.

Sincerely,

Mike Avery  
VSSA Board Member



March 20, 2025

Wes Townsend, Chair  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, Delaware 19901

Joseph Cimino, Chair  
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission  
1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Dear Chairman Townsend and Chairman Cimino,

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) represents the nation's recreational fishing industry, including manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, and advocacy groups. We champion America's 57.7 million anglers, whose sportfishing activities generate \$230 billion annually for the U.S. economy while advancing social, economic, and conservation goals.

ASA is providing comments on the proposed Omnibus Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass and the Bluefish Fishery Management Plans' Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment.

It is important to note that different recreational modes, including the for-hire (comprised of both inspected and uninspected "6-pack" operations), private boating, and shore anglers, all have differing characteristics, motivations, and access to the resource. The goal of any management action should be to balance these factors effectively while promoting responsible resource conservation. Some example characteristics include the for-hire sector needing stability in measures for longer-term business planning, while shore anglers generally face restricted access and selectivity challenges.

With these differences in mind, ASA has endorsed management changes implemented through the Harvest Control Rule and Recreational Measure Setting Process because these actions aim to benefit all anglers across all recreational fishing modes. Regarding "sector separation," which involves various approaches the Council and Commission might consider to treat anglers differently across modes, ASA opposes establishing separate mode-specific allocations. Recreational catch data, in particular, continues to exhibit significant variability, and the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) is undergoing another re-estimation process, expected to conclude in 2026. Simply put, recreational catch information does not support a sub-ACL approach.

Instead of endorsing separate catch limits for each recreational fishing mode, ASA suggests the development of recreational management measures customized to the unique traits of each mode within the recreational sector, a concept termed "mode management." Nevertheless, regardless of how "mode management" is implemented, ASA strongly opposes any option that would exempt any mode from the conservation requirements outlined in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) or established through the annual specification process.

AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 501, Alexandria, VA 22314 • 703-519-9691 • Fax: 703-519-1872  
Web: [www.ASAFishing.org](http://www.ASAFishing.org) • Email: [info@ASAFishing.org](mailto:info@ASAFishing.org)

This amendment additionally seeks feedback on ways to improve recreational data collection. Recreational data collection has and will remain a challenging issue within fisheries management. ASA supports vessel trip reporting requirements as part of the consideration of how to set measures for the for-hire sector. The issue of state-permitted only vessels with access to the affected species not having their catch accounted for in the same way as federally permitted vessels required to submit eVTRs should be addressed through this catch accounting Amendment.

ASA looks forward to the Council and Commission continuing this discussion and is committed to submitting specific ideas on achieving the goals once they are better specified through this action. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Waite", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Waite  
Atlantic Fisheries Policy Director  
American Sportfishing Association



# EAST COAST FISHING COALITION

## Representing:

Cape Cod Charter Boat Association  
Montauk Boatmen and Captains Association  
New Jersey Charter Boat Association

Connecticut Charter & Party Boat Association  
Rhode Island Charter and Party Boat Association  
Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association

Maryland Charter Boat Association  
North Fork Captains Association  
Delmarva Charter Boat Association

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## The Urgent Need for Mode Management

The East Coast's for-hire fishing fleet is a vital economic engine for our coastal communities, yet it faces an existential crisis driven by regulations influenced by special interest groups rather than grounded in sound scientific evidence. Over the past 12 years, our sector has endured escalating restrictions, including the closure of fisheries for species like Mako shark, Cod, the imposition of an excessively restrictive 3-inch striped bass slot limit, and ongoing efforts to further curtail striped bass harvests. Black Sea Bass are thriving at record levels, yet also now have closed seasons, seemingly unachievable minimum sizes and extremely low bag limits. These actions have inflicted severe economic harm on an industry integral to our East Coast communities, affecting the livelihood of fishermen and our families

### Disproportionate Regulatory Burden

Despite being responsible for *only 10%* of all fish harvested, the for-hire fleet bears a disproportionate burden of regulatory restrictions. Private recreational anglers essentially fish whenever and wherever they want, with minimal oversight, as evidenced by Connecticut shore anglers harvesting over a million scup in a single year. In contrast, our for-hire clients typically save up for a single annual trip, hoping to catch enough for dinner for their families. The costs of running our businesses—fuel, dockage, insurance, staff, and maintenance—are all factored into our charges.

### Urgent Need for Mode Management

To ensure the survival of our small businesses, support our families, and continue contributing to our states' economies, we urgently need Mode Management. This system would keep us under the recreational umbrella but grant us fairer rules, such as longer seasons, higher catch limits, and more reasonable size requirements. Without these changes, the for-hire industry and all those it supports are at serious risk.

### Flawed Data and Special Interest Influence

Since 2019, the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) has been found to overestimate recreational fishing effort by *at least 40%*, leading to unjustified tightening of regulations on the for-hire sector. Despite MRIP's awareness and studies highlighting these overestimations over the past two years, *no corrective measures have been implemented*. Additionally, the influence of special interest groups has skewed policy decisions, prioritizing their agendas over empirical scientific data and the survival of fishing communities.

### Economic Importance of the For-Hire Industry

The East Coast's for-hire fishing industry plays a crucial role in providing access to marine resources for individuals without private boats, regardless of socioeconomic status. Numerous small businesses, including restaurants, hotels, tackle shops, package stores, and gas stations, rely on the for-hire fleet to stimulate local economies. Delaying the implementation of Mode Management to any other timeline than **immediately** would be a significant failure of regulators to act accordingly, as prompt emergency action is essential to preserve our industry's viability.

Sincerely,  
The Officers of the ECFC

**President-** Capt. Marc Berger, Connecticut

**Vice President-** Capt. Rick Bellavance, Rhode Island

**Secretary-** Capt. William Hatch, Massachusetts

**Treasurer-** Capt. Jill Maganza-Ruiz, New York



# Connecticut Charter and Party Boat Association

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## Mode Management

The Connecticut Charter and Party Boat Association represents 30 professional charter fishing boats, headboats, and light tackle fishing guides, covering Western, Central and Eastern Long Island Sound. For many years, we have worked closely with government agencies such as NOAA, the ASMFC and the NEFMC to ensure the long-term viability of saltwater fish species, increased access for all recreational anglers and suitable regulations for the charter/headboat fleets. The culture of saltwater fishing is to fish not only for pleasure and enjoyment, but also for table fare.

During the last 4 years, excessive and unreasonable regulations have been imposed upon our businesses by the federal government based largely on NOAA's recently adopted "New MRIP" program. This includes our local species such as Striped Bass, Bluefish, Black Sea Bass and Scup. It is highly publicized by NOAA's own employees that there is a 40% margin of error favoring these strictly enforced regulations. We believe it is even much higher than that. The poster child of this over-regulation is the Black Sea Bass fishery. This species has been thriving for 15 years and has spawned to a point of overabundance from Virginia to Maine. The population of this species is currently 210% above levels set by NOAA to maintain a healthy fishery, yet regulations have been forced upon us as if the species were in jeopardy of overfishing. Black Sea Bass inhabit areas just minutes from our harbors and are so abundant that the current biomass is described by our Captains as an "infestation" and stating they are negatively altering Long Island Sound.

Currently, the For Hire industry is governed by the same set of regulations as casual recreational anglers. This one-size fits-all approach fails to recognize the distinct economic differences between these two groups. This was a satisfactory method of management before "New MRIP" was adopted, but we are now at a tipping point. Local shoreline economies such as marinas, hotels, restaurants, tackle shops, and other merchants all rely on the success of our industry to sustain their own livelihoods. We pride ourselves on giving our clients a quality experience, and just as any other business, we hope our customers come back again another day. It is important to remember that the For-Hire fleet is only responsible for 10% of all fish harvested.

Connecticut's Black Sea Bass regulations now vary significantly from our bordering states. Thanks to "New MRIP", "Conservation Equivalency" had to be adopted. Connecticut, being a small state, has the borders of New York and Rhode Island just minutes from most of our harbors. These discrepancies often result in situations where fishermen, who are adhering to the regulations of one state, inadvertently are illegitimate in a neighboring state. Consequently, they are compelled to discard their catch even if the fish meet the size requirements and are caught during an open season in their home state or risk being issued a hefty fine. This inconsistency is not only confusing but is infuriating to our customers, who often drive for hours and hours very early in the morning for their, once-a-year (and very expensive), fishing trip. Words cannot express how frustrating and bad for business this is. It is imperative that state and federal agencies work together to harmonize these regulations across state borders. Establishing consistent size limits with no closed season for Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island would alleviate much of the confusion and frustration faced by our fishermen.

**We are asking to remain within the recreational harvest quota in the form of Mode Management. A 28" - 35" Striped Bass slot with a year round open season and a consequential *and crucial* increase in the East Coast recreational Black Sea Bass harvest quota.**

**Immediate action must be taken if our industry is to survive.**

Sincerely,  
The Officers of the CCPBA

**President**  
Capt. Marc Berger

**Vice-President**  
Capt. Seth Margale

**Secretary**  
Capt. Michael Pirri

**Treasurer**  
Capt. TJ Karbowski

Dr. Chris Moore  
RE: Rec. Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment  
March 20, 2025

The East Coast has a new neglected species that is going extinct and it needs Emergency Action... that species is the "The For- Hire Fleet". In the last 12 years The For Hire category has seen a major reduction or closures on every species their customers enjoy catching and eating. With Closures of Mako Shark, Cod fish, a 3" Striped Bass Slot, and special interest groups trying to force closure of Striped Bass harvest, it is very important that we rush relief to the For Hire Fleet and deliver mode management immediately.

Mode Management was introduced by MR. Mike Pentony (in late 2024) to a few Captains in Providence, RI. at a NOAA workshop. Mode Management is when the For- Hire fleet stays in the Recreational Sector but is allowed preferred regulations, longer seasons without closures, increased creels, and easier achieved lengths. It is important to remember that the For-Hire fleet is only responsible for 10% of all fish harvested.

Private recreational anglers don't need to plan their fishing trips around regulations. Private recreational anglers who own their own boats and tackle, can fish as much as they want or stay until they catch what they need. Shore Anglers own the tackle, know the shore access points, have knowledge of the tides and can fish as often and long as they need. Shore anglers in some states are offered increased opportunity to harvest smaller fish. Over 1,000,000 Scup were harvested by CT. Shore Anglers in a single year. For-Hire anglers usually can only afford one trip a year giving them one chance at harvesting a family dinner. The price of a fare charged by For Hire operators factors in fuel, dockage, insurance, staff, maintenance and a small living for the owner.

For Hire Fishermen were confused by the recent scoping meetings as only Sector Separation was introduced, where For Hire Fishermen feared a separate quota based on MRIP would close fishing opportunity before the season's end. For Hire Fishermen felt the presentation was ill-prepared and delayed the much-needed relief out two more years. In 2019 MRIP began overestimating recreational effort by 40%. ABCs were expanded for commercial harvest, but recreational limits were held even or reduced as uncertainty and additional discards were applied. This MRIP overestimate has been known and studied for 2 years but yet no corrections have been made. A new FMP is being developed without the consideration of high MRIP estimates, and not enough consideration is being given to Abundant SSBs. How long does an overabundant Black Seabass biomass need to invade the bottom before Black Seabass regulations are liberalized?

The For Hire industry is responsible for providing access and harvest for people who don't own boats regardless of social economic status. Many small businesses depend on the For Hire fleet

to generate local commerce that otherwise wouldn't have been available to a coastal communities ie.: Restaurants, Hotels, Delis, Tackle shops, Liquor stores, and Gas station. Mode management needs to be fast tracked and become the policy makers' highest priority. It will be seen as a complete failure if this relief is not ready to go for the 2026 season.

Sincerely  
Captain Michael Pirri  
FlyingConnie Charters  
& AP member MAFMC Scup, Seabass and Fluke





R.I. Party and Charter Boat Association  
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President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Director

Capt. Rick Bellavance  
Capt. Jasper Coutu  
Capt. Andrew D'Angelo  
Capt. John Rainone  
Capt. Nick Butziger

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

Dr. Moore,

On behalf of the 50 members of the R.I. Party and Charter Boat Association (RIPCBA), I submit the following scoping comments to be considered in the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the Bluefish FMP.

### **Sector Separation**

The RIPCBA supports the Council and Commission in developing a better system for managing the recreational fishery to meet the varying needs of recreational fishermen. We aim to stabilize measures for the for-hire sector to rebuild the industry. This issue, raised by the for-hire sector for years, requires quick attention. Data shows a decline in active for-hire permits, catch, and for-hire trips. This action should reverse these trends.

During the scoping period, there was considerable support for "mode management," and the RIPCBA acknowledges this concept as discussed in the hearings. For-hire operators along the coast identified the need to revise the management of the for-hire fleet. Since the scoping hearings, our organization has reflected on this idea and consulted many for-hire operators about mode management. We believe that a minor adjustment to mode management could be evaluated. "Sector Management" is the term we prefer to use. Recreational sectors would be defined and managed distinctly, focusing on for-hire and private sectors. Creating a system by headboat/charter/private/shore modes would complicate things and may lead to failure. A more effective method is to treat for-hire(combined) and private(combined) as separate sectors when developing measures and ensuring accountability. As measures are developed within these sectors, modes such as shore versus private boat or headboat versus 6-pack could be further specified if necessary, but they would still fall under the umbrella of each sector.

A sector management system wouldn't need separate recreational allocations and Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) for different recreational sectors but would allow tailored measures for each sector and its modes. Accountability will be managed at the sector level with adjustments made similarly to current methods. A sector management process could possibly be developed through a Framework Adjustment, saving time for the struggling for-hire sector. The imprecise, inaccurate, and highly variable recreational catch data present challenges developing sector allocations and sub-ACLs, potentially delaying action. As recreational catch data improves, sub-ACLs with separate AM's could be considered but may not be necessary if sector management fixes the problem.

The RIPCBA supports a process where measures are adjusted within a sector only when the catch in that sector warrants it. A sector, along with any modes within it, would not need to change measures if another sector exceeded or underharvested projected expected catch. The aim is to avoid the influence of the private sector on the measures setting process for the for-hire sector, and vice versa. We acknowledge there may be questions to address, but focusing on developing sector management could help refine the details.

The issue of latent federal for-hire permits needs to be addressed. Over 60% of permits for Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish show no activity as required by eVTR regulations. One approach could be some sort of cap on permits or implementation of activity standards. A cap on for-hire permits should consider utilizing these latent permits in a permit bank for new entrants. Any cap should also accommodate the growth of the for-hire industry and establish an application process for new entrants. We advocate for a permitting framework that acknowledges the safety,

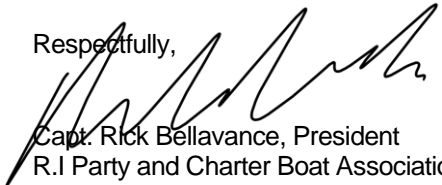
reporting, and operational requirements inherent in the for-hire industry. This approach could be utilized to prevent fishermen from switching between sectors to exploit the most lenient regulations. Aligning the professional standards of the for-hire industry with stable management measures is an objective worthy of pursuit.

### **Data Collection**

A data collection adjustment to consider is collecting trip-level data, including discards and landings, from all state-permitted for-hire operators. Reporting requirements are not consistent in all states. Implementing a standardized logbook for federal and state permitted operations along the east coast could significantly enhance recreational catch data. Currently, operators of federally permitted vessels are mandated to submit an electronic Vessel Trip Report for each trip taken. Electronic reporting tools are already accessible and easy to use. We suggest electronically submitted monthly Did Not Fish reports be included to determine activity.

The RIPCBA appreciates the council and commission's attention to the for-hire fleet's current challenges. We believe this effort will lead to a recreational management system that fosters growth, reduces conflict, and enhances professionalism in the for-hire fleet. We look forward to continued collaboration as the process unfolds. Thank you for the time to offer our comments.

Respectfully,



Capt. Rick Bellavance, President  
R.I. Party and Charter Boat Association



March 20, 2025

Submitted via electronic mail to [kdancy@mafmc.org](mailto:kdancy@mafmc.org); [cmoore@mafmc.org](mailto:cmoore@mafmc.org)

RE: Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment Scoping

Dear Council and Policy Board Members,

Please accept The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) comments on the Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment Scoping. We have been supportive of the Council's efforts to improve recreational management through the Recreational Reform Initiative and appreciate the Council and Commission bringing this Amendment out for public scoping.

TNC's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work in more than 70 countries and all 50 states and the territories in the U.S. TNC has been working to conserve, protect, and restore coastal and marine habitats and species for over four decades. We are known for our science-based, collaborative approach to developing creative solutions to conservation challenges. Our work in the ocean has been focused on conserving habitats and marine species and improving and sharing science that enables solution-oriented decision-making. We are deeply invested in promoting sustainable fisheries management and have partnered with the public entities including NOAA and the Council on many science, restoration, and management initiatives through cooperative agreements and service on various agency advisory bodies. In addition, we have a long-standing history of service and engagement on various Council and Commission Committees, APs, and working groups.

Effective management of the recreational component of a fishery is critical to overall stock health and sustainability and relies upon earnest engagement of and by recreational fishers themselves. Yet, over the last decade or more, public trust in the data, science, and management of recreational fisheries has eroded, and in a variety of recreational fisheries forums we've heard the desire for alternative self-reported data sources to be developed. The path to rebuilding that engagement and trust begins with proactive actions – such as this Amendment – that directly respond to the concerns of resource users. TNC hopes this Amendment process, starting with the scoping period, will illuminate some of the specific concerns and challenges facing the for-hire and private components of the recreational fishery. Ideally, a range of actions can be developed that are tailored to address specific issues identified during scoping and prioritized by the Council and Commission. Below we describe some of the challenges and opportunities we hope the Council and Commission will explore through development of this amendment.

There is clearly appetite among certain stakeholders for separate management of the for-hire and private recreational sectors. TNC believes that separating these sectors may be a logical step in the near future, but such an important measure should be built upon a foundation of careful analysis. Implicit in an action that separates the for-hire and private recreational sectors is a pledge to monitor how these fisheries utilize public resources. Therein lies the impetus for the two components of this Amendment: *sector separation* is likely not possible without improved *data collection* and use.

#### *For-hire data issues*

There are significant disparities in how different states collect data from for-hire fishing in state waters. Indeed, states including Maryland and New York require for-hire permits and trip level reporting of total catch and effort for all permit holders. Massachusetts requires a permit but does not require reporting. New Jersey requires neither a permit nor reporting. At the same time, Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) are required for federally licensed for-hire boats in all states. Many of these operators may be utilizing the exact same stock. Moreover, data from for-hire reports (including federal VTRs) is not being fully utilized to manage fisheries. This lack of follow-through by the state and federal agencies, as well as the Council and Commission, reduces incentive for reporting accuracy and compliance. TNC suggests two actions that will begin to rectify these issues.

1. Conduct a comparative analysis of for-hire catch data collected via VTRs and the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). This analysis could investigate whether trends in the two data streams are similar. A simple starting point could be with a single state (e.g., New York) and a single species (e.g., black sea bass). Such an analysis could qualitatively assess both methods and serve as a “gut check” that may offer clarity on future for-hire data collection and use. This analysis should be conducted now as part of the development of the Amendment.
2. Consider options for aligning the for-hire permit and reporting requirements among states in the Greater Atlantic region. Explore methods to make the reported data public (while adhering to confidentiality requirements) and options for using the data in assessment and management. Broadly and effectively communicate the reasons for making the changes, including that the data may be used to inform potential mode management. The additional burden on state agencies resulting from this action could be mitigated by requiring the use of digital reporting platforms and by involving the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSPP) as a central administrator and repository of VTR data.

#### *Private recreational data issues*

Uncertainty begets uncertainty, and private recreational data is no exception. Fundamental characteristics of this sector – including how many people participate, how many trips they take,

and how many fish they catch and release – remain unclear. Whether or not any form of sector separation is adopted by the Council and Commission, increasing the precision and accuracy of private recreational data should be a priority. To this end, TNC suggests several actions for consideration.

1. The problem of deficient recreational data is not specific to the Mid-Atlantic. Enabling conditions for Council-level actions on this issue also exist elsewhere, including in the southeast region. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) is currently considering the creation of a permit or license endorsement specifically required for participants in the snapper/grouper (i.e., reef fish) fishery in federal waters (SAFMC Snapper Grouper Amendment 46). While the SAFMC's action is still in the early phases, it may befit the MAFMC and ASMFC to deliberate the merits of a similar action, perhaps for the federal-waters black sea bass, scup, and summer flounder fishery. At a minimum, such a permit would narrow the universe of private anglers that participate in this individual fishery and therefore decrease the sample frame from which private recreational data are collected. This could increase precision of catch and effort estimates that are critical to science-based management.
2. Evaluate opportunities for increasing self-reporting in the private recreational sector. Increasing engagement in data collection can be an opportunity to build trust in data and ultimately in the science and management the data feeds into. Ideas for discussion include:
  - a. Consider a pilot program to investigate potential for reporting in a certain fishery or local fleet. For instance, the Southeast Regional Office and SAFMC recently (2024) issued several Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs) to the state of Florida for a similar purpose. Under these EFPs, Florida allows out-of-season take of red snapper via a lottery system. One EFP created a “study fleet” of private and for-hire vessels. In exchange for allowing red snapper harvest, participants are required to complete an education course, declare their trip via hail-in hail-out, report their catch with a smartphone app, and validate their trip via dockside sampling, cameras, and/or observers. Preliminary results have been encouraging, with high levels of interest, positive feedback for the program, and reports of enhanced relationships and trust between the angling community and the agency. TNC recommends the Council and Board explore the utility of a version of this in the Greater Atlantic region. More details on the Florida EFPs may be found at [www.myfwc.com/AtlanticEFP](http://www.myfwc.com/AtlanticEFP).

The February black sea bass season in Virginia is an example of a successful required reporting program in the Mid-Atlantic. This special season has requirements similar to those mentioned above (including a special permit, trip declaration, and enhanced dockside sampling) and has resulted in highly precise estimates of catch and effort. We recognize that other states are not necessarily interested in a February black sea bass season, but there may be components of

that program that could be translated to some other special access season to pilot mandatory reporting.

- b. The Nature Conservancy has recently completed an analysis of electronic self-reporting programs for marine recreational fisheries in the United States. We have made an initial report of these findings to the Council in a past public comment but bring them up here to note that several viable mobile apps and platforms currently exist. Our findings include insights that may be valuable to the Council and Commission, including qualitative and quantitative metrics of successful programs. A version of our analysis is currently in peer review. As part of this Amendment process, we suggest that the Council and Board do a deeper analysis on existing mandatory reporting programs in the Greater Atlantic region. Understanding what works (and what doesn't) when recreational reporting is required would be an asset to the process of enhancing data collection. Results could be described to Council members to shed light on what is working, what is not working, and whether the existing systems could be improved before pursuing any future mandatory reporting programs. Another resource on this topic is a recent analysis of mandatory recreational bluefin tuna reporting (Goldsmith et al., 2023; [doi.org/10.1002/nafm.10929](https://doi.org/10.1002/nafm.10929)).

The Council and Board have faced difficult management scenarios for scup, summer flounder, black sea bass, and bluefish over the last several years. This scoping process offers a chance to take a step back and clearly articulate specific challenges and opportunities for new approaches to meet those challenges. We look forward to continued engagement on potential solutions for the sustainable management of these stocks as the Amendment is developed further. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Kate Wilke  
*Mid-Atlantic Seascape Director*  
*The Nature Conservancy*  
[Kate.Wilke@tnc.org](mailto:Kate.Wilke@tnc.org)  
434.942.7652

1075 Tooker Avenue  
West Babylon, NY 11704  
March 17, 2025

Kiley Dancy  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Ms. Dancy:

The following are my comments on the Public Information/Scoping Document (the “Document”) for the proposed Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment (the “Proposed Amendment”). To put my comments in context, I am a private boat angler who maintains a vessel in Babylon, New York, on the South Shore of Long Island, and targets all four of the relevant species primarily in the Great South Bay and in the ocean south of Long Island, where I fish both on wrecks, usually in 80 to 120 feet of water, and on somewhat shallower open bottom and, in the case of bluefish, in open water as well.

While I am not in favor of sector separation, for the reasons set forth below, I have also commented on my preferred options should the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (the “Council”) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s (the “ASMFC”) Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass and Bluefish Management Boards (collectively, the “Management Board”) elect to put such a management system in place.

Although the term “sector separation” can be applied to any management plan that includes mode-specific regulations, regardless of which modes are affected, given the history of the Document and the frequent support for sector separation voiced by members of the for-hire fishing industry operating in the Mid-Atlantic region, the following comments are made on the assumption that the Proposed Amendment would contemplate regulations to govern the for-hire sector that were different from those that governed the private boat/rental boat and shore-based angling sectors, and that the latter two sectors would be governed by a common set of rules.

The following comments are arranged to correspond to the questions asked in the Document, in the order that such questions are presented.

I  
**RECREATIONAL SECTOR SEPARATION SHOULD *NOT* BE ADOPTED FOR THE RECREATIONAL SUMMER  
FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS, OR BLUEFISH FISHERIES**

A  
**Recreational regulations govern the conduct of anglers, not the conduct of angling-related businesses,  
and it would be patently inequitable to favor a small subset of anglers with more liberal regulations  
while relegating the overwhelming majority of anglers to a subordinate status.**

Recreational regulations are set at the individual angler level, establishing bag limits, size limits, and seasons that such anglers must obey. Should any such regulations be violated, it is the individual angler, and not the owner or operator of the vessel that such angler may be fishing from, who will be cited for such violation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the adoption of regulations that discriminate between anglers based on mode would necessarily create an inequitable situation, in which the majority of anglers were disadvantaged so that a small number of recreational fishermen might be gifted with a higher bag limit, smaller minimum size, and/or a longer season.

It should also be noted that the for-hire sector already harvests a disproportionate number of fish, compared to anglers in the North Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic regions taken as a whole. According to MRIP, during the years 2021, 2022, and 2023, anglers fishing from for-hire vessels were responsible for about 6.4% of all trips primarily targeting black sea bass, 2.3 percent of all trips primarily targeting scup and summer flounder, and less than 0.9% of all trips primarily targeting bluefish.<sup>2</sup> During the same period, despite the low proportion of trips, the for-hire sector accounted for 10.0% of all recreational black sea bass landings, and 9.2% of all scup, 4.6% of all summer flounder, and 5.3% of all bluefish landed by the recreational sector.<sup>3</sup>

There is no need to further increase already disproportionately high for-hire landings by favoring anglers fishing from for-hire vessels with more liberal regulations than those that apply to other anglers.

Many anglers decry the disparate regulations that have already been put in place, such as the higher bluefish bag limit for the for-hire mode,<sup>4</sup> as unfair to shore-based and private boat anglers. Such disparate regulations also create a serious compliance issue, for when such anglers see their counterparts on for-hire vessels allowed to keep more bluefish, or more scup<sup>5</sup> or, in some states, more

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<sup>1</sup> The vessel owner may be held liable for bag limit violations if the fish on board such vessel are pooled in one or more common containers and are not readily identifiable as belonging to a particular angler. 50 C.F.R. 648.106(c), 648.128(c), 648.145(c), and 648.164(b).

<sup>2</sup> NOAA Fisheries, Recreational Fisheries Statistics Queries, U.S. Department of Commerce, Retrieved February 2, 2025

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> 50 C.F.R. 648.184(a)

<sup>5</sup> Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, "2024 and 2025 State/Regional Scup Recreational Management Measures," available at [https://asmfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ScupRecMeasures\\_20242025.pdf](https://asmfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ScupRecMeasures_20242025.pdf)



black sea bass<sup>6</sup> than are allowed the general angling population, a significant number become indignant, believing that if for-hire anglers may take more or smaller fish, they should be able to do so as well, and so are more willing to violate the regulations applicable to their mode.

## B

### **Regardless of mode, anglers pursuing summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass are motivated by the same desire to harvest fish.**

The Document states that “the two sectors [for-hire and private boat/shore] have differing motivations, preferences, fishing behavior, operational needs, and data reporting requirements.”<sup>7</sup> That statement is only partially true.

At least in the case of the summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass fisheries (but not necessarily in the bluefish fishery), the anglers, regardless of mode, have the same motivation, which is a desire to catch their target species in order to bring fish home for personal consumption. Although fishing for all three species may be enjoyable, none are “sport” fish as that term is generally understood; that is, none are sought primarily for the experience of catching them, and then frequently released after being brought to hand. Instead, they are “meat” fish, which are pursued primarily for their food value. Thus, the motivations of the anglers who pursue them are the same; they all wish to bring fish home for dinner.

It is difficult to separate anglers’ “preferences” from their “motivations,” as once again, regardless of mode, anglers will prefer whatever regulatory approach allows them to harvest some fish. One might argue that lower-income party boat patrons are more willing to retain smaller fish in order to bring something home that might justify the costs of their trip, but the same argument applies to low-income shore-based anglers, who are often fishing for food and perhaps can’t afford the cost of a half-day for-hire trip. Thus, the argument that a lower-income for-hire angler’s preferences are materially different from those of such angler’s shore-based counterpart would have little support.

When considering the supposed differences between for-hire anglers and private boat/shore-based anglers, the only factors that might be at least somewhat different are the “operational needs” and data-reporting requirements. Yet it is important to note that both of those factors come into play not at the angler level, but at the level of the vessel owner/operator, and thus do not clearly justify treating the for-hire angler differently from anglers utilizing different modes to access the fishery resource.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, “Saltwater Fishing Guide,” available at <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/fishing/saltwater-fishing-guide/species-regulations>

<sup>7</sup> Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, *Public Information/Scoping Document, Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment, An Omnibus Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass and the Bluefish Fishery Management Plans*, January 2025, p. 2.

## C

### **Economic considerations provide, at best, a weak argument for sector separation**

As noted earlier, for-hire anglers account for a very small proportion of angler trips targeting summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, or bluefish. They must then also, of necessity, make up only a small proportion of the economic benefits gleaned from the recreational fisheries for those species. That is true both because the relatively few trips taken on for-hire vessels, when compared to other modes, and also because for-hire angling is arguably the most cost-effective way to harvest the relevant species.

For-hire anglers pay a fixed fee for each trip they take, which might typically be about \$60 for a half-day trip and about \$100 for a full day trip aboard a head boat<sup>8</sup> and perhaps twice as much for a typical “six-pack” charter, assuming that six anglers actually participate in the trip.<sup>9</sup> For that price, anglers are supplied with a rod and reel (which must, on some head boats, be rented for a nominal fee), bait, and the services of a knowledgeable captain and crew, which maximize the chances for a successful trip. Anglers need pay nothing beyond their fare (although a tip for the mate is traditional and, on many boats, a fee for fish cleaning is charged), and have no obligation for the fixed costs associated with vessel ownership. And since such vessels typically sail on multiple days during the week, and not infrequently make two or three trips on a single day, those fixed costs are amortized over many individual angler trips.

Private boat angling, on the other hand, is, from a purely economic standpoint, a very inefficient means of harvesting fish. Before ever leaving the dock, the private boat angler must purchase the vessel (and, in many cases, take out a loan to do so, incurring interest costs), purchase any necessary electronics and fishing gear, and pay for insurance, dock space (or, as an alternative if the vessel is small enough, purchase and pay the costs to maintain, register, and insure a trailer), mechanical services, and, in many cases, winter storage. Whether an angler fishes a few times each week, or is limited by work, weather, and family commitments to only fishing a few times each month, those fixed costs remain the same.<sup>10</sup> When the private boat is actually used, costs for bait and fuel are also incurred. Even if the costs of a private boat trip are allocated among multiple anglers who might be on the boat on any particular occasion, the economic activity generated by a single private boat trip, or attributable to each fish harvested by a private boat angler, is substantially more than that generated by or attributable to an angler fishing from a for-hire boat. And given that private boat anglers were responsible for 80% of all black sea bass trips taken during the years 2021-2023, as well as 38.8% of all trips primarily targeting scup, 58.5% of all trips primarily targeting summer flounder, and 17.4% of all trips targeting bluefish

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Laura Lee Fleet website, fares available at <https://captree.com/ticketmgmt/calendar/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Priority Charters website, fares available at <https://www.priorityfishingcharters.com/trip-types>

<sup>10</sup> To provide an example, over the past six months, fixed costs for maintaining my personal vessel, a 32-foot Topaz express sportfisherman built in 1989 and docked in Babylon, New York, included \$1,846 for insurance, \$2,827 for various maintenance items, \$3,852 for winter storage, \$2,362 in engine service, and \$5,632 for 2025 dockage. Admittedly, summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish trips only make up a part of the trips taken over the course of a season, and the costs of operating a smaller vessel, particularly one that is trailered rather than docked and kept on the owner's property over the winter, are significantly less. Nevertheless, fixed-cost expenditures raise the per-trip costs for private boat anglers far above those of anglers fishing from for-hire vessels.

during the same period,<sup>11</sup> all percentages that exceed the proportion of trips taken by for-hire vessels by at least an order of magnitude, the overall economic benefits gleaned from the private boat fishery for the four relevant species substantially exceeds the benefits provided by the for-hire sector as well.

Fisheries management is essentially a zero-sum exercise, in which, to avoid overfishing, regulations that allow one sector to harvest more fish must be offset by regulations that require another sector to harvest less. Given that truth, it makes little sense to craft regulations that encourage anglers to fish from for-hire vessels, which provide a lesser economic benefit, while at the same time adopting stricter regulations that might dissuade other anglers from engaging in the private boat fishery which generates greater economic activity overall, as well as on a per-trip and per-fish-landed basis.

## II

### **IF THE COUNCIL AND MANAGEMENT BOARD DECIDE TO ADOPT SOME FORM OF SECTOR SEPARATION, THEY SHOULD ALSO ADOPT A SEPARATE ALLOCATION FOR THE FOR-HIRE SECTOR**

#### A

**Because recreational sector separation would be adopted solely to benefit the for-hire industry, and not the recreational angler, it should be accompanied by a separate allocation to the charter fishing sector, so that more liberal regulations for that sector do not reduce the number of fish available to private boat and for-hire anglers.**

As noted earlier, fisheries management is a zero-sum exercise. In order to prevent overfishing, it is necessary to compensate for more liberal regulations being granted one sector by imposing more restrictive regulations on another.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (“Magnuson-Stevens”),<sup>12</sup> recognizes both “recreational fishing,” defined as “fishing for sport or pleasure,”<sup>13</sup> and “charter fishing,” defined as “fishing from a vessel carrying a passenger for hire (as defined in section 2021(21a) of Title 46, United States Code) who is engaged in recreational fishing.”<sup>14</sup>

Establishing separate allocations for the recreational fishing and charter fishing modes defined in Magnuson-Stevens provides a rational solution to the inequities that would arise if for-hire, private boat, and shore-based anglers were all included in a single recreational sector allocation and recreational harvest limit (“RHL”), while for-hire anglers were allowed to fish under more liberal regulations than the remainder of the recreational sector, regardless of the relative importance of the for-hire and private boat modes to the overall fishery or to the overall economic activity generated by anglers within such mode.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, NOAA Fisheries

<sup>12</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

<sup>13</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1802(37)

<sup>14</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1802(3)

That is particularly true given that there is no compelling equitable, economic, or philosophical argument in favor of discriminating between anglers belonging to the various modes, and that the only argument in favor of sector separation is to provide a benefit to the owners and operators of for-hire vessels. By creating separate allocations for the recreational fishing and charter fishing sectors, the charter fishing sector could adopt whatever size limits, bag limits, and seasons that it believed necessary to promote the for-hire industry, so long as the resulting harvest remained within the sector allocation, without having a negative impact on anglers fishing from private boats or from shore.

## **B**

### **The allocation for the charter fishing sector should be based on such sector's recent share of the landings, and not on old data that is irrelevant to today's fishery**

Magnuson-Stevens provides that "If it becomes necessary to allocate or assign fishing privileges among various United States fishermen, such allocation shall be fair and equitable to all such fishermen. [formatting omitted]"<sup>15</sup> It would be manifestly unfair and inequitable to grant the charter fishing sector an allocation that did not reflect its current share of the landings of any of the recreational species.

"Current," for the purposes of setting such allocation, should be a time period which reflects the now-prevailing legal and regulatory framework, angler preferences, angler demographics, and social and economic trends, as well as the relative abundance of the various species pursued by recreational fishermen in the North Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic regions.

For example, the five years between 2020 and 2024 (or, perhaps the years 2019 and 2021-2024, to avoid any distortions created by the COVID pandemic) would provide reasonable base years for the allocation between the recreational fishing and charter fishing sectors. On the other hand, the inclusion of any years prior to the passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996<sup>16</sup> or the appellate court's decision in *Natural Resources Defense Council v. Daley*,<sup>17</sup> which together ushered in the modern era of marine fisheries management, would be inappropriate. The Council and Management Board should strive to adopt allocations that reflect what the recreational fishery and charter fishery look like today, and are likely to look like in the future, and not what they looked like in the past.

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<sup>15</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(4)

<sup>16</sup> P.L. 104-297

<sup>17</sup> 209 F.3<sup>rd</sup> 747

### III

**THE COUNCIL AND MANAGEMENT BOARD SHOULD ONLY LIMIT ENTRY TO THE FOR-HIRE FISHERY FOR SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, BLACK SEA BASS, AND BLUEFISH IF IT ADOPTS SECTOR SEPARATION BUT DOES NOT ESTABLISH SEPARATE ALLOCATIONS FOR THE RECREATIONAL FISHING AND CHARTER FISHING SECTORS; IF SEPARATE ALLOCATIONS ARE ESTABLISHED, IMPOSING LIMITED ENTRY IS UNNECESSARY**

Once again, it is necessary to acknowledge the zero-sum nature of fisheries management, and the fact that providing more liberal regulations to one mode of angling will necessarily require that other modes fish under more restrictive management measures.

As noted above, allowing for-hire, shore-based, and private boat anglers to fish on the same general recreational allocation, while adopting more liberal regulations solely for the for-hire mode, creates an inherent inequity. To further allow the for-hire sector to expand, at least theoretically creating more for-hire anglers fishing under such liberal regulations, would require that shore-based and private boat anglers fish under increasingly restrictive regulations to compensate for the additional fish taken by the for-hire mode, and only compound the inequity.

The only way to prevent such an increasingly inequitable situation from developing is to convert the for-hire fishery into a limited entry fishery. In that way, landings from the for-hire mode would remain relatively stable, preventing them from increasing and causing a corresponding decrease in the number of fish available to anglers in the shore and private boat modes, while also preventing an increase in for-hire landings, attributable to more liberal regulations affecting that mode, from causing recreational landings to exceed the RHL and lead to more restrictive regulations for everyone.

On the other hand, if a separate allocation was established for for-hire vessels, there would be no need to place any limit on the size of the for-hire fleet, as the landings of the charter fishing sector would have no impact on the regulations applicable to the recreational fishing sector (while excessive landings in the recreational fishing sector would also have no impact on the charter fishing sector). The recreational fishing sector, like the charter fishing sector, would be held accountable only for its own overages, and so would be free to adopt any combination of size limit, bag limit, and seasons which would best benefit the industry, so long as such management measures constrained for-hire catch to or below the sector annual catch limit. Under such circumstances, the marketplace would largely determine the prevailing management measures, as well as the size and composition of the for-hire fleet.

## IV OTHER CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO SECTOR SEPARATION

### A

#### **Conservation equivalency might be required to maintain equity between modes**

If the Council and Management Board choose to adopt sector separation, and also elect to include the for-hire, shore-based, and private boat modes in a single recreational allocation, such management bodies should consider the use of the ASMFC's doctrine of "conservation equivalency"<sup>18</sup> to maintain equity between anglers in the different modes.

As defined by the ASMFC, conservation equivalency is "Actions taken by a state which differ from the specific requirements of the [fishery management plan], but which achieve the same specified level of conservation for the resource under management. One example can be, various combinations of size limits, gear restrictions, and season length can be demonstrated to achieve the same targeted level of fishing mortality."<sup>19</sup>

If, for the purposes of sector separation, the words "taken by a state" were replaced by "applicable to anglers in a particular mode," the problem of inequitable management measures due to sector separation could be largely alleviated.

Under such an approach, if the for-hire mode was granted, for example, a larger bag limit in order to attract more business, the size limit applicable to that mode would be increased, or the season shortened, in order to maintain equity among modes, and prevent anglers in any mode from receiving benefits not available to others. It is probably the only way to avoid disadvantaging private boat and shore-based anglers in a sector separation situation, unless separate allocations are adopted.

### B

#### **Should sector separation be adopted, care will have to be taken to avoid regulations that would, as a practical matter, deny fair access to the resource for all modes.**

Sector separation can have unintended consequences, and one of those consequences could easily be a denial of fair access to certain species, particularly summer flounder and black sea bass.

New York anglers had some experience with the issue after the Council created the Research Set-Aside Program for summer flounder, which ran from 2002 through 2014.<sup>20</sup> In the latter years of the program, New York for-hire boats were allowed to participate, purchasing set-aside quota that could then be

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<sup>18</sup> See Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, *Conservation Equivalency: Policy and Technical Guidance Document*, October 2023, available at [https://asmfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ConservationEquivalencyGuidance\\_Oct23.pdf](https://asmfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ConservationEquivalencyGuidance_Oct23.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>20</sup> Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, "Research Set-Aside Program," available at <https://www.mafmc.org/research-set-aside>

caught by their customers outside of New York's recreational summer flounder season.<sup>21</sup> That allowed them to fish when summer flounder were still in the bays, but could not be accessed by anglers in the shore-based or private boat modes. When shore-based and private boat anglers could finally access the resource, they found that the numbers of legal-sized fish remaining in the bays had already been whittled down by the for-hire vessels.

Thus, should sector separation be adopted, equity requires that seasons for all modes begin on the same date.

Black sea bass present another potential problem. They are a structure-oriented species, but there is little natural hard ocean bottom in the Mid-Atlantic region. Most black sea bass fishing takes place on artificial reefs or on wrecks. And, although the fish do engage in some in-season movement, the largest number of legal-sized black sea bass are present on individual wrecks when the season opens. After that, the removals of black sea bass from the wrecks steadily degrade the quality of the fish available until, by autumn, legal-sized individuals become very difficult to find (at least until cooling waters cause large fish to migrate down from New England, although that tends to create a deeper-water fishery prosecuted a substantial distance from shore).

Such decline in the quality of black sea bass fishing as the season progresses has always occurred but, in my personal experience, is particularly noticeable when party boats, that might carry 40, 50 or more passengers on a single trip, begin fishing the wrecks, and quickly remove many of the legal-sized fish, even though anglers on such boats supposedly observe the same regulations as those on private vessels. Should the bag limit for the for-hire mode be increased, and with the big party boats often making two and sometimes three trips per day, every day that the weather and customer demand permits, private boat anglers, most of whom can only fish on weekends, will experience a significantly diminished opportunity to catch legal-sized black sea bass in the Mid-Atlantic region. To help alleviate such problem, should sector separation be adopted, management measures to reduce the minimum size should be favored over those that increase the bag limit.

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, Jennifer, "New regs have 'em reeling," *Newsday*, July 15, 2009, available at [http://www.jennifersmithjournalist.com/uploads/3/3/1/6/3316691/rsa\\_fishing\\_permits.pdf](http://www.jennifersmithjournalist.com/uploads/3/3/1/6/3316691/rsa_fishing_permits.pdf)

## V

### **RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION PRESENTS A DIFFICULT ISSUE, AS THERE ARE FEW WAYS TO VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF ANGLER- AND VESSEL-SUPPLIED CATCH DATA, WHICH IS INHERENTLY PRONE TO MULTIPLE SOURCES OF BIAS AND UNCERTAINTY**

## A

**Mandatory angler reporting will not yield reliable data due to significant noncompliance and intentional misreporting introducing multiple biases and high levels of uncertainty; given that the species in question are summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish, rather than pelagic species sought by competitive anglers, mandatory tournament reporting would probably provide little valuable data.**

Mandatory angler reporting is not a practical approach to recreational data-gathering, particularly in the case of popular food fish such as summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. Even mandatory reporting requirements for large game fish, such as bluefin tuna, are largely ignored; one recent study suggested that, at best, about 40% of recreationally-caught Atlantic bluefin tuna are reported to the National Marine Fisheries Service, as regulations require.<sup>22</sup> That is roughly consistent for other recreational harvest reporting rates, when such reporting is supposedly mandatory; for example, about 49% of the whitetail deer taken by New York hunters are reported as required.<sup>23</sup>

And both bluefin tuna anglers and whitetail deer hunters are relatively small constituencies that are easily identified by the permits and tags that they hold. Anglers pursuing summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish are a far larger and more diverse constituency, that ranges from children fishing off a dock for young-of-the-year “snapper” bluefish to recently arrived immigrants with little command of English fishing from shore for food to middle-class fishermen and the well-off owners of expensive sportfishing boats. To expect such a diverse group, many of who may have limited access to electronic media, to report their scup landings on a regular and accurate basis is not reasonable, and to even attempt to determine compliance rates on a demographic basis, with enough accuracy to make the data usable, would be a daunting and probably impossible task.

Add to that issue the fact that some fishermen will inevitably try to game the system, either understating or overstating their landings in an effort to bias the analysis in a way that might allow more liberal regulations, and the futility of mandatory reporting becomes clear.

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<sup>22</sup> Goldsmith, William, “Projects in the Field: Exploring Strategies to Improve Electronic Reporting in the Recreational Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fishery,” *EM4Fish*, October 1, 2022, available at <https://em4.fish/projects-in-the-field-exploring-strategies-to-improve-electronic-reporting-in-the-recreational-atlantic-bluefin-tuna-fishery/>

<sup>23</sup> New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, “DEC Announces 2023-2024 Deer Harvest Estimates,” available at <https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases/2024/5/dec-announces-2023-24-deer-harvest-estimates#:~:text=49.9%20percent%20%E2%80%93%20portion%20of%20successful,24%20statewide%20deer%20harvest%20estimate.>



With respect to tournament reporting, there are relatively few tournaments targeting the four relevant species, and those that do are, for the most part, attract anglers who are not necessarily representative of the fishery as a whole.

Mandatory angler reporting of any kind is just not suitable for the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries.

## B

**Harvest tags, special stamps, species-specific permits and similar measures are not appropriate for “meat” fish such as summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish, which are typically landed in large quantities.**

Controlling recreational harvest privileges through harvest tags, stamps, or similar devices is a tested approach to control and document landings in recreational fisheries; *however*, they are typically used in fisheries in which either annual landings or the number of individuals allowed to access the resource is limited.

Thus, the State of Florida restricts goliath grouper harvest to those anglers who have obtained the required permit and tag. No more than 200 such permits and tags may be issued annually, and anglers may not receive more than one permit and tag each year; resident anglers pay \$150 for such permit and tag, while nonresident anglers are charged \$500.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Florida also issues special tags that are required of anglers who wish to land tarpon solely for purposes of challenging a state or International Game Fish Association record; landing for any other purpose is prohibited. Anglers may only obtain one such tag, and kill just one tarpon, per year, although that restriction does not apply to tags issued to charter boats.<sup>25</sup>

Even when more commonly encountered species are involved, tags are generally used to control harvest only when annual limits are small. Thus, the State of Texas issues each angler who purchases a salt water fishing license a single tag, which allows that angler to land one red drum measuring more than 28 inches in length during the license year. Anglers may also purchase a second, “bonus red drum tag” which allows them to land a second over-28-inch drum during the season. But no more than two such drum may be landed by an angler in a single year.<sup>26</sup>

Such an approach is clearly impractical in the case of fish that are not so closely regulated, and can be landed in quantities ranging from three to 50, depending on the species, season, and mode, during each day of an extensive season.

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<sup>24</sup> Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, “Goliath Grouper Harvest Permit,” available at <https://myfwc.com/license/recreational/saltwater-fishing/goliath-grouper-harvest-permit/>

<sup>25</sup> Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, “Frequently Asked Questions: Recreational Tarpon and Boca Grande Tarpon Gear,” available at <https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/tarpon/faqs/>

<sup>26</sup> Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, “Fishing Endorsements, Tags, & Permits,” available at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/licenses/fishing-licenses-stamps-tags-packages/fishing-endorsements-and-tags#:~:text=Find%20a%20retailer-,Red%20Drum%20Tag,See%20tagging%20information.>

## C

**Vessel trip reports, whether enhanced or otherwise, should be used with caution, for unless there is a way to independently verify the data therein, it may be inaccurate and/or subject to intentional manipulation**

Vessel trip report (“VTR”) information is often presented as more accurate than information provided by MRIP, but that is not necessarily so. While many vessel trip reports undoubtedly accurately reflect the fish caught and released on a particular vessel, VTRs may often, whether intentionally or unintentionally, misstate and/or understate the number of fish landed on any given for-hire trip.

The problem is probably less severe in VTRs filed by “six-pack” charter boats, who carry a small number of passengers at any one time, which allows the captain and/or crew to maintain a reasonably accurate count of the fish caught and released. However, even on such vessels, data manipulation can occur.

I have had conversations with the captain of a well-regarded charter boat based in Montauk, New York, who has related how some of his fellow captains intentionally understate the number of fish released, or do not record such fish at all, in order to minimize the number of live releases reported by MRIP, in order to also reduce the calculated level of release mortality, knowing that higher levels of release mortality will result in more restrictions on landings.

I have also had the opportunity to review the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s response to a Freedom of Information request seeking the number of striped bass landed and released by each of the state’s registered for-hire vessels. While the vessels themselves were not identified, the information was provided on a per-vessel basis, and the results were somewhat incongruous. For while some for-hire operators reported catching hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of striped bass over the course of a season, landing some and releasing others, there were other operators who reported landing hundreds of bass, without having to release a single fish because it was either undersized (the data was for a year when a 28-inch minimum size, rather than a slot limit, was in effect) or over the bag limit. Such lack of undersized or over-limit striped bass caught by a vessel involved enough in the fishery to have landed hundreds of bass over the course of a season, is simply not credible, and reflects intentional misreporting, but multiple vessels engaged in such behavior. And while striped bass are not one of the species contemplated in the Document, it is probably safe to assume that a for-hire operator who would willfully misrepresent striped bass releases would also misrepresent landings and/or releases of the four relevant species.

Party boats present an even more challenging problem. Their very size, and the number of passengers carried on each trip, make it difficult to accurately record the number of fish landed. That is particularly true with fish such as scup, which may have a bag limit as high as 40 fish per person.<sup>27</sup> And beyond counting the fish legally taken by passengers, there is a significant problem with poaching aboard such vessels, something the Council recognized in 2018, when it held a Law Enforcement/For-Hire Workshop

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, “Recreational Saltwater Fishing Regulations,” available at <https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/saltwater-fishing/recreational-fishing-regulations>

on November 13-14 of that year to address the issue. The report that summarized the proceedings of such workshop acknowledged the problem, noting that “the operator of a 40-passenger headboat has a more limited ability to monitor the fishing activities of every customer, even if the vessel operator employs one or two mates. This may be particularly difficult when fishing is heavy and vessel crew members are busy assisting many customers at any one time.”<sup>28</sup>

Party boat owner-operators have also freely admitted that they do not feel that they can safely inspect a passenger’s cooler to count the number of fish within. At one meeting of New York’s Marine Resources Advisory Council, “Mr. Schneider [owner-operator of the Huntington, New York-based party boat James Joseph] said you need to be very careful how you handle certain situations. His crew has already been threatened when they asked to see what was in someone’s cooler.”<sup>29</sup>

The difficulties in accurately accounting for fish on a crowded party boat, even when passengers are on their best behavior, casts doubt on the reliability of the information contained in such vessels’ VTRs. Poaching by party boat anglers, who may potentially become violent if a boat’s crew tries to count their fish, only compounds the problem. And, unfortunately, poaching aboard party boats is not a rare event. At the same meeting that saw Capt. Schneider describe the threats faced by his crew when they seek to count some anglers catch, a representative of the law enforcement community noted that enforcement personnel frequently encounter episodes of illegal harvest at every party boat port in New York. “Officer Reilly of the DEC Law Enforcement stated that unclaimed coolers are a large part of the problem. Once Enforcement agents are spotted, coolers are abandoned. They can contain as many as 130 fish [when the bag limit is only four or eight]. **Another large problem is that the vessel trip report doesn’t always match up to the number of fish caught.** [emphasis added]”<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to believe that all, and probably any, of such illegally harvested fish are recorded on a vessel’s VTR. That is particularly true when some captains appear to adopt a posture of willful ignorance with respect to the number of illegal fish on board, as seemed to be the case on a trip that occurred off New Jersey, when at least 819 black sea bass were retained by multiple party boat patrons on a single trip targeting other species, when the black sea bass season was closed. In response to a reporter’s questions, the captain of that vessel reportedly said, “I didn’t think it was that many. And I’m not getting paid by the State of New Jersey to take fish out of people’s buckets.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, FINAL REPORT, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Law Enforcement/For-Hire Workshop,” January 2019, p. 1, available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/5c3e32886d2a73f897b42d9b/1547580048311/Law+enforcement+for-hire+workshop+Final+Report+1-9-19.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Marine Resources Advisory Council, Bulletin, March 6, 2018, p. 13, available at <https://bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/you.stonybrook.edu/dist/a/1045/files/2018/04/MRAC-Bulletin-March-6-2018-1e5dn9v.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>31</sup> From an article originally appearing in the Asbury Park Press, and reprinted on the website *Stripers Online*, “Big Jamaica patrons busted for illegal seabass & porgy,” available at <https://www.stripersonline.com/surftalk/topic/470270-big-jamaica-patrons-busted-for-illegal-seabass-porgy/page/6/#comments>

Given that attitude, it is reasonable to wonder how many of the illegally harvested fish were recorded on the vessel's VTR. It is also reasonable to wonder how often similar events occur on vessels all along the Mid-Atlantic coast.

For the reasons stated above, assumptions about the superior accuracy of VTRs probably overstate the precision of the data provided, which is not necessarily any more accurate than that provided by MRIP with respect to private boat and shore-based anglers.

#### **D**

#### **“Citizen science” projects could enhance the data available to fisheries managers, provided that the data provided is statistically valid**

Well-designed citizen science projects could provide valuable data and enhance the fishery management process, provided that such projects provided statistically valid data. To that end, projects which require random sampling, or the voluntary reporting of catch data across all modes and demographic groups, require a more disciplined methodology than anglers, as a whole, are able or willing to provide. But sampling data that does not require adherence to any specific methodology could assist in the management process.

Perhaps the best example of the need for such data was the debate over bluefish discard mortality that occurred at the October 2019 Council meeting, when the methodology that Council staff used to estimate such discards, assuming that the bluefish released were of the same size as those harvested, yielded a far lower estimate of discard mortality, 4.03 million pound, than the methodology used by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, which incorporated release data from the American Littoral Society tagging program and voluntary angler surveys from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, which resulted in a discard estimate of 9.90 million pounds.<sup>32</sup>

Since anglers tend to dislike the stronger, oilier flesh of large bluefish, and so generally release larger individuals while retaining smaller fish for the table, the Council's ultimate decision to adopt the 4.03 million pound discard mortality figure almost certainly led to such discards being understated by approximately 5 million pounds, and recreational regulations for the 2020 season being far too lenient, at a time when the stock had been declared overfished and rebuilding had not yet begun.

A well designed citizen science program that gathered data on the size of bluefish released by anglers throughout the species' range might well have avoided such outcome. Thus, citizen science, used within its practical limitations, could benefit the fishery management process.

Thank you for considering my views on these matters.

Sincerely,  
Charles A. Witek, III

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<sup>32</sup> Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Memorandum from Matthew Seeley to Dr. Chris Moore, September 11, 2019, pp. 3-4, available at [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/5d8e37ac60b5124facac156b/1569601454749/Tab08\\_Bluefish-Specifications\\_2019-10.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/511cdc7fe4b00307a2628ac6/t/5d8e37ac60b5124facac156b/1569601454749/Tab08_Bluefish-Specifications_2019-10.pdf)



March 20, 2025

Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director  
Wes Townsend, Council Chair  
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
800 North State Street, Suite 201  
Dover, DE 19901

RE: Scoping for Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment

Dear Dr. Moore and Mr. Townsend,

Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) submits this letter and the attached white paper as scoping comments to be considered in the potential development of the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and the Bluefish FMP. EDF appreciates the work that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) has completed to date to revitalize this topic.

Recreational sector separation has long been a topic of interest for regional stakeholders and decision makers. Initiating this action will allow the Fishery Management Action Team to conduct necessary analyses to help answer longstanding questions surrounding how to tailor management to the varying needs, data availability, and sustainability and economic implications of the for-hire and recreational sectors. Moreover, consideration of recreational sector separation can help the MAFMC navigate persistent unknowns such as the impacts of discards,<sup>1,2</sup> how to improve in-season monitoring and accountability – a key concern of stakeholders within both the commercial and recreational sectors – in the wake of newly calibrated Marine Recreational Information Program estimates, among others.

Any possible changes to management are likely complicated by climate impacts such as warming waters, species distribution shifts, and more frequent severe weather events. If the MAFMC moves

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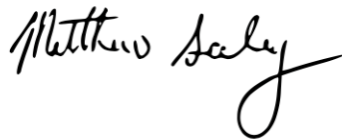
<sup>1</sup> In 2022, the Council completed a management strategy evaluation which evaluated different management strategies designed to minimize discards in the recreational summer flounder fishery. Available here: <https://www.mafmc.org/actions/summer-flounder-mse>

<sup>2</sup> Discrepancies in bluefish discard estimates have been under review since at least 2019 and are thoroughly discussed here on page 5: [Staff memo, July 12, 2022. Review of 2023 Bluefish Specifications](#)

forward with the action, it will be important to consider management alternatives that promote climate resilience and accountability, as well as fairness and equity. EDF recently published the attached white paper, “Quota Allocation Policies in U.S. Federal Fisheries Management and Implications for Climate Resilience,” in which we identify eight best practices that are intended to guide fishery managers in their development of climate-resilient fishery allocation policies. The eight best practices are to: (1) define clear and measurable management objectives; (2) define and collect data required to assess and adjust allocation policies; (3) facilitate quota transfers between regions, sectors, and individuals; (4) balance historical and contemporary resource access in setting allocations; (5) ensure opportunities for new entrants; (6) allocate quota for research and experimentation; (7) reduce impacts of changes to allocation policies on stakeholders; and (8) conduct regular reviews of allocation policies. We hope that this white paper<sup>3</sup> can be a helpful resource to the MAFMC moving forward.

Thank you for considering these comments. EDF looks forward to further engaging with the MAFMC on these critical issues.

Sincerely,



Matthew Seeley  
Senior Manager, Resilient Fisheries Solutions  
Environmental Defense Fund



Allison Shields  
Senior Manager, U.S. Fisheries & Ocean Policy  
Environmental Defense Fund

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<sup>3</sup> EDF quota allocations white paper can also be accessed here: <https://www.edf.org/content/quota-allocation-policies-us-federal-fisheries-management-and-implications-climate>. A manuscript developed from this white paper is also currently under review with Fish & Fisheries.



# **QUOTA ALLOCATION POLICIES IN U.S. FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE**



# Quota Allocation Policies in U.S. Federal Fisheries Management and Implications for Climate Resilience

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## ABSTRACT

Developing quota allocation policies, which divide fishing catch or effort between regions, sectors, subsectors, individuals, and/or seasons, is one of the most important and contentious processes in fisheries management. These policies often aim to advance fairness and equity goals by preserving levels of historical participation and access. However, this reliance on historical patterns makes allocation policies vulnerable to climate change, which is shifting the accessibility of marine resources among historical and new participants. Despite this, there is little guidance on best practices for adapting allocation policies to climate change. In the United States, regional flexibility to design locally relevant allocation policies has innovated a diversity of approaches that can be studied for their climate vulnerability and/or adaptivity. Here, we synthesize the diverse allocation policies used to manage U.S. federal fisheries (491 stocks, 42 management plans, 8 regions) and evaluate the vulnerability of these policies to climate change. We find that allocation policies are used to manage 46% of federally managed stocks. Although most policies are based on historical catch, many include features that promote climate adaptiveness, including the ability to transfer quota between states, sectors, or individuals; adjustment of allocations based on current resource distribution or abundance; set aside of quota to support research and experimentation; and gradual phase in of policy changes. Ultimately, we provide eight transferable recommendations for improving the ability for allocation policies to advance their fairness and equity goals under climate change.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is shifting the abundance, distribution, and phenology of harvested marine resources, which is challenging the ability for managers to maintain the conservation and socioeconomic goals of global fisheries (IPCC, 2019). To achieve conservation goals, managers must establish catch or effort controls that maintain sustainability as stocks experience climate-driven shifts in their productivity and distribution (Gaines et al., 2018). To meet socioeconomic goals, managers must further ensure that access to shifting resources remains fair and equitable despite changing oceanographic conditions (Tokunaga et al., 2023). This can be achieved through a combination of management policies ranging from permitting, which governs who can access resources, to quota allocation, which governs how much catch or effort is available to those with permitted access (Ojea et al., 2017).

Quota allocation is arguably one of the most important and contentious processes in fisheries management as it dictates how access is shared among fishery participants. While the establishment of catch limits is a largely scientific and objective process (Punt, 2010), decisions about how to distribute the resulting quota is more subjective and depends on complex socioeconomic considerations (W. E. Morrison & Scott, 2014). Quota allocations are often made between jurisdictions (e.g., international, regional, state), sectors (e.g., commercial, recreational, tribal, research), subsectors (e.g., gillnets, longlines), individuals (e.g., catch shares), and seasons. Allocations are often based on relative levels of historical catch or effort as they frequently aim to maintain proportional access for fishing communities historically dependent on fishery resources (Cox, 2009; FLSF, 2010; Lynham, 2014). However, climate change is causing rapid departures from historical conditions, which can lead to unfair, inequitable, and inefficient resource use when access is based solely on historical dynamics (Palacios-Abrantes et al., 2020, 2023; Pinsky et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2024). As a result, fisheries managers will need to develop procedures for adapting quota allocation policies so that they continue to advance their fairness and equity objectives despite changing ocean conditions.

The challenge posed by climate change is perhaps most direct for spatial quota allocation policies as climate change will rearrange the distribution of stocks. Spatial allocations, which allocate quota across different management areas (e.g., countries, regions, states), generally aim to ensure that harvest is proportional to either the biological availability of the resource or the historical dependence of fishing communities on the resource. However, climate-driven shifts in the distribution of marine species imply that historical benchmarks used to set spatial allocations will not reflect future distributions (Palacios-Abrantes et al., 2020, 2023; Pinsky et al., 2018). This can present a number of conflicts, inequities, and inefficiencies. For example, if allocations are not updated to reflect shifted distributions, some fishing communities may be unable to capitalize on increases in local availability, which would be especially challenging if other species in their portfolio are negatively impacted by climate change (Cline et al., 2017; Samhour et al., 2024). Worse still, they may be at increased risk of closure if they are unable to avoid the newly abundant yet tightly regulated resource. Furthermore, vessels from a region maintaining its historical access rights may need to travel farther to fulfill their quota (Young et al., 2019), increasing both their costs, safety concerns, and carbon emissions (Papaioannou et al., 2021; Scherrer et al., 2024). Thus, there is an urgent need to develop frameworks for adapting spatial allocation policies to climate change.

The allocation of quota between and within sectors has less direct though still important connections to climate change. Allocations between sectors guarantee access for all sectors and, like spatial allocations, are often allocated in proportion to historical dependence (Edwards, 1990). However, climate change is pushing resources deeper (Pinsky et al., 2013), which could challenge the ability for nearshore recreational fisheries and/or small-scale commercial vessels to attain their historical quotas (Papaioannou et al., 2021). Allocations between gears have similar goals, but can also be used to limit effort by gears with larger bycatch or habitat impacts (Jenkins & Garrison, 2013). However, climate change is also altering bycatch patterns (Free, Anderson, et al., 2023), which could exacerbate bycatch issues if allocations based on historical patterns are maintained. Finally, allocations between individuals or groups (e.g., fishing cooperatives or communities), often termed “catch shares”, can improve safety-at-sea by slowing the race to fish (Birkenbach et al., 2017) and improve sustainability by better aligning conservation and economic incentives (i.e., catch shares only hold value if a stock is healthy and the quota is large) (Costello et al., 2008). However, these policies are also largely established based on historical catch patterns (Lynham, 2014), which makes them vulnerable to climate change (Tokunaga et al., 2023). Furthermore, catch shares often lead to less diverse fishing portfolios (Holland et al., 2017), which can reduce resilience to climate change.

The laws governing U.S. federal fisheries management mandate that allocation policies be fair, equitable, and transparent, but gives regional managers immense flexibility in how they achieve these goals. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary legislation governing U.S. federal fisheries, provides ten National Standards to define management requirements, of which National Standard 4 directly relates to quota allocations (MSA, 2007). This provision specifies that allocations must be “(1) *fair and equitable to all such fishermen*; (2) *reasonably calculated to promote conservation*; and (3) *carried out in such manner that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges*” (§ 600.325 National Standard 4—Allocations, 1998). Given the absence of practicable alternatives, both official guidance and adopted practices have generally aimed to be fair and equitable by maintaining historical access and harvests, though with additional considerations for new entrants, bycatch, economic efficiency, and many other factors (Plummer et al., 2012). This gives the eight regional Fishery Management Councils (FMCs) (**Figure 1**) flexibility to design allocation policies tailored to their specific socioeconomic and ecological contexts. However, these approaches may have different strengths and weaknesses in their ability to maintain fairness and equity under climate change.

The U.S. has been expanding guidance on improving the adaptiveness of allocation policies, but this guidance has yet to explicitly consider climate change. In 2011, the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) launched an effort to provide more detailed guidance on allocation (Lapointe, 2012). This process began with a review of the allocation policies used in U.S. federal fisheries management (W. E. Morrison & Scott, 2014; Plummer et al., 2012), which provided the basis for subsequent guidance on criteria for triggering the review of allocation policies (W. Morrison, 2016a) and factors to consider when conducting such reviews (W. Morrison, 2016b, 2017c). This guidance, which was cemented as national policy between 2016 and 2017 (W. Morrison, 2017b, 2017a), calls for an adaptive process for continually evaluating whether allocation policies are meeting management objectives and for adjusting these policies when objectives are not being met. These policies suggest that the review of an allocation policy could be triggered based on a tracked

performance indicator or public input or at regular time intervals. They also highlight that the ability to transfer quota between states, sectors, or individuals offers in-season adaptability. While both of these guidelines provide some inherent climate resilience, the connection to climate change is not explicit, and more guidance on strategies for climate-adaptive allocation policies is needed (US GAO, 2022).

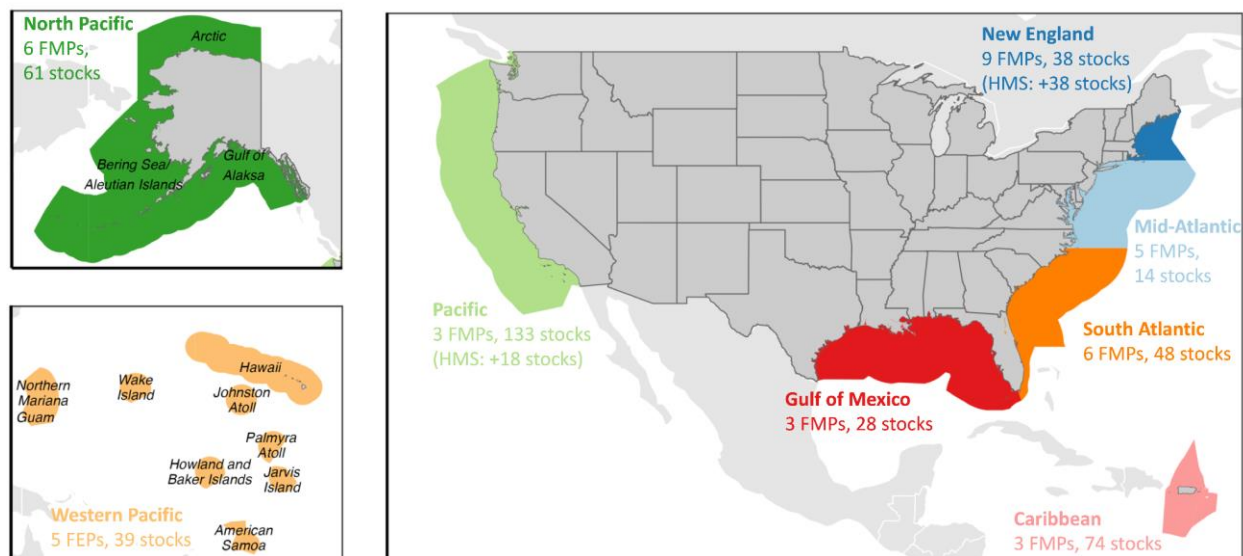
In this report, we synthesize the diverse allocation policies used to manage U.S. federal fisheries, evaluate the vulnerability of these policies to climate change, and provide recommendations for increasing the climate-adaptiveness of allocation policies. We begin by cataloging the allocation policies of 491 stocks managed by the 42 fisheries management plans developed by the eight FMCs into a standardized database. This provides a platform for understanding the myriad of allocation approaches taken across the U.S. and for understanding how approaches differ by region and taxa. We then evaluate the vulnerability or adaptiveness of these policies to climate change and offer recommendations for increasing the ability for these policies to maintain equity and fairness under climate change. We draw these recommendations from best practices identified from both U.S. and international fisheries management. Since reforming fishery management policies is an intensive bureaucratic process, we identified candidate FMPs and stocks that are sensitive to climate change and would therefore benefit from a policy review. Finally, we conclude the paper by reflecting on how these insights relate to international and state fisheries also seeking to maintain the fairness and equity of their allocation policies under climate change.

## 2. ALLOCATION POLICIES IN US FISHERIES

### 2.1 Methods

We inventoried the quota allocation policies currently implemented in U.S. federal fisheries management by reviewing all 37 Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), 5 Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs), and their associated amendments for descriptions of their allocation policies (**Table S1**). We prepared a brief summary of each allocation policy to provide a clear and concise description of these frequently complex policies using a consistent structure and terminology. Each summary describes the types of allocation policies used, the recipients of quota, the amount of quota allocated to each recipient, and the basis for the allocation amounts. When necessary, we reviewed documents in addition to the FMPs, FEPs, and amendments to gather this information (e.g., Environmental Impact Statements and Final Rulings in the Federal Register). In some cases, we also summarized the history of changes made to the allocation policy and the motivation for these changes. These historical adjustments provide critical insights into considerations and pathways for adapting allocation policies in response to climate change. However, we only recorded this information when it was readily accessible to keep the scope of the review manageable. The summaries are provided in the following GitHub repository:

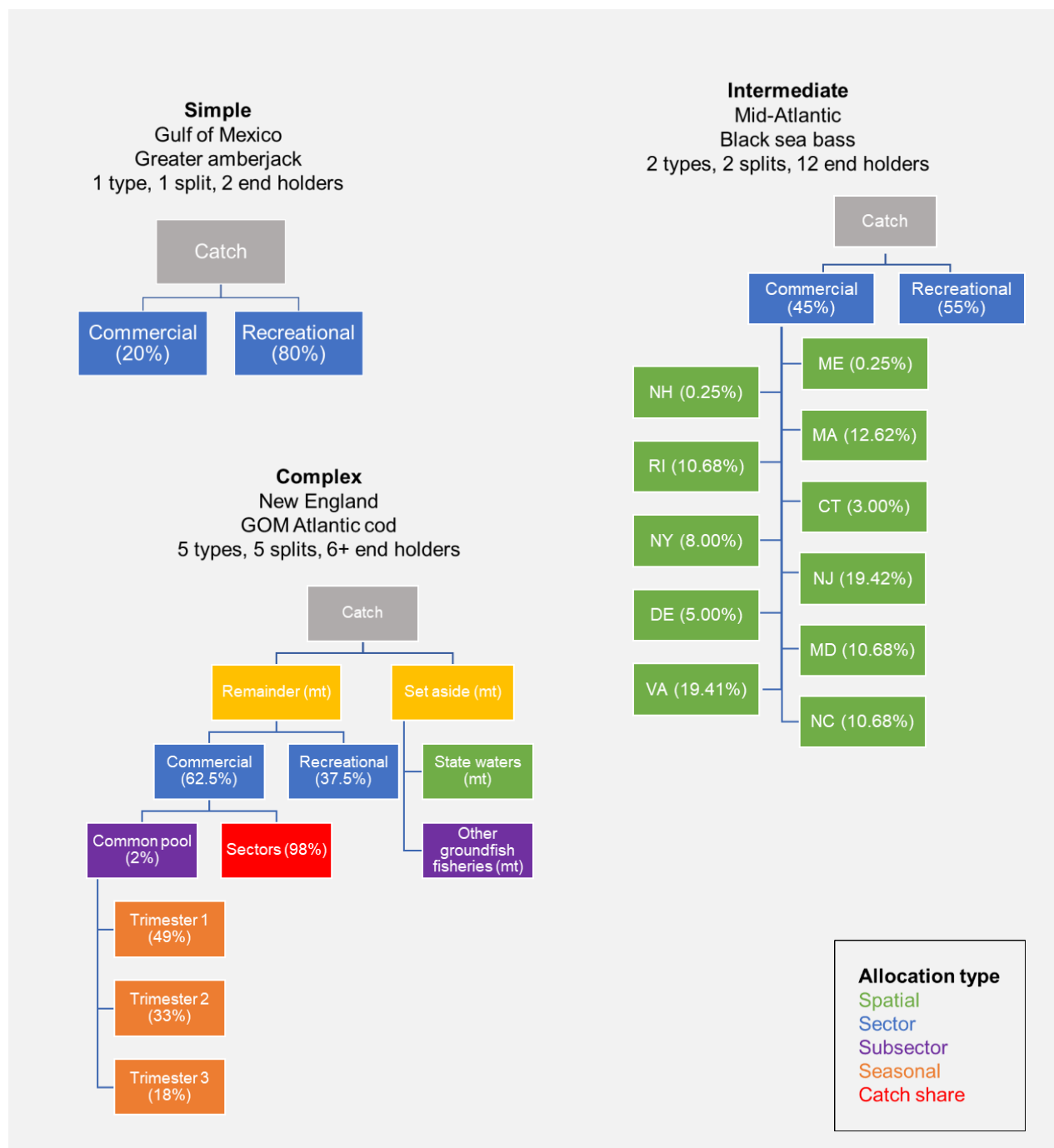
[https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc\\_allocation](https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc_allocation).



**FIGURE 1.** The jurisdiction of the eight U.S. regional Fishery Management Councils (FMCs) and details on the number of Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) or Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) implemented by the FMC and the number of stocks managed by the FMC (HMS = highly migratory species).

We used the summaries to develop a database describing the allocation policies used to manage all 491 federally-managed marine fish and invertebrate stocks with a common set of characteristics. The database summarizes (1) basic information on each stock (i.e., FMC, management plan, species group); (2) the allocation policy types used to manage the stock; and (3) traits of each of the implemented allocation policy types. We classified allocation policy types into five categories: spatial, sector-based, subsector-based, catch shares, or seasonal (**Figures 2 & 3**). A spatial policy allocates quota among countries, states, or other management areas. A sector-based policy allocates quota among commercial, recreational, tribal, and research fleets. A subsector-based policy allocates quota to groups (e.g., gear types, vessel size tiers, product end uses) within one of these sectors. A seasonal policy allocates quota across different seasons. We use “catch shares” as a general term for allocation policies that distribute quota among individual fishermen, groups of fishermen, cooperatives, fishing communities, or other entities, which include individual fishing quotas (IFQs), territorial use rights for fisheries (TURFs), and limited access privilege programs (LAPPs). We excluded limited access permits that were not specifically associated with an effort or catch allocation. We recorded the basis for each allocation type, i.e., whether the allocation amount was derived based on historical catch or effort, equal catch or effort, or an auction. We also recorded the number and identity of geographies, sectors, or subsectors receiving allocations. The structure of the database is illustrated in **Table S1** and the full database is provided in the following GitHub repository: [https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc\\_allocation](https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc_allocation)

We confirmed the accuracy of our summaries and database by comparing them to information synthesized in other relevant but less comprehensive reports (FLSF, 2010; W. E. Morrison & Scott, 2014; Plummer et al., 2012; Tokunaga et al., 2023).



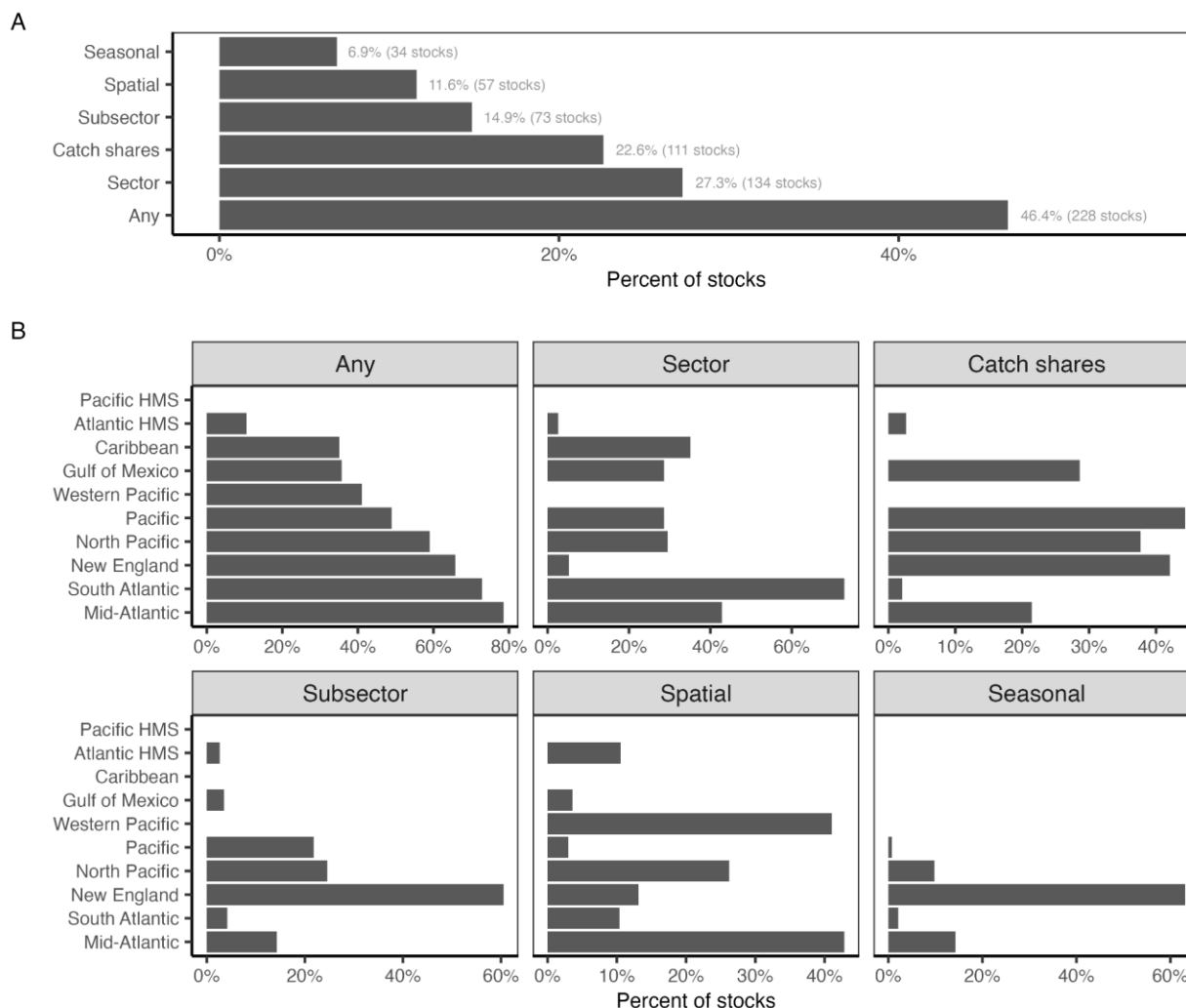
**FIGURE 2.** Flowcharts illustrating examples of quota allocation policies of low, medium, and high complexity. Box color indicates the type of allocation policy.

## 2.2 Results

### 2.2.1 Overview

A large portion (46%; 228 of 491 stocks) of federally managed fish and invertebrate stocks are managed using some form of quota allocation policy (**Figure 3**). Sector-based allocation policies are most common, followed by catch shares, subsector-based, spatial, and seasonal policies. Allocation policies are especially commonly used by the U.S. East Coast FMCs (i.e., the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and New England).





**FIGURE 3.** The percent of federally managed fish and invertebrate stocks managed using quota allocation policies (A) nationwide and (B) by regional Fishery Management Council.

## 2.2.2 Spatial allocations

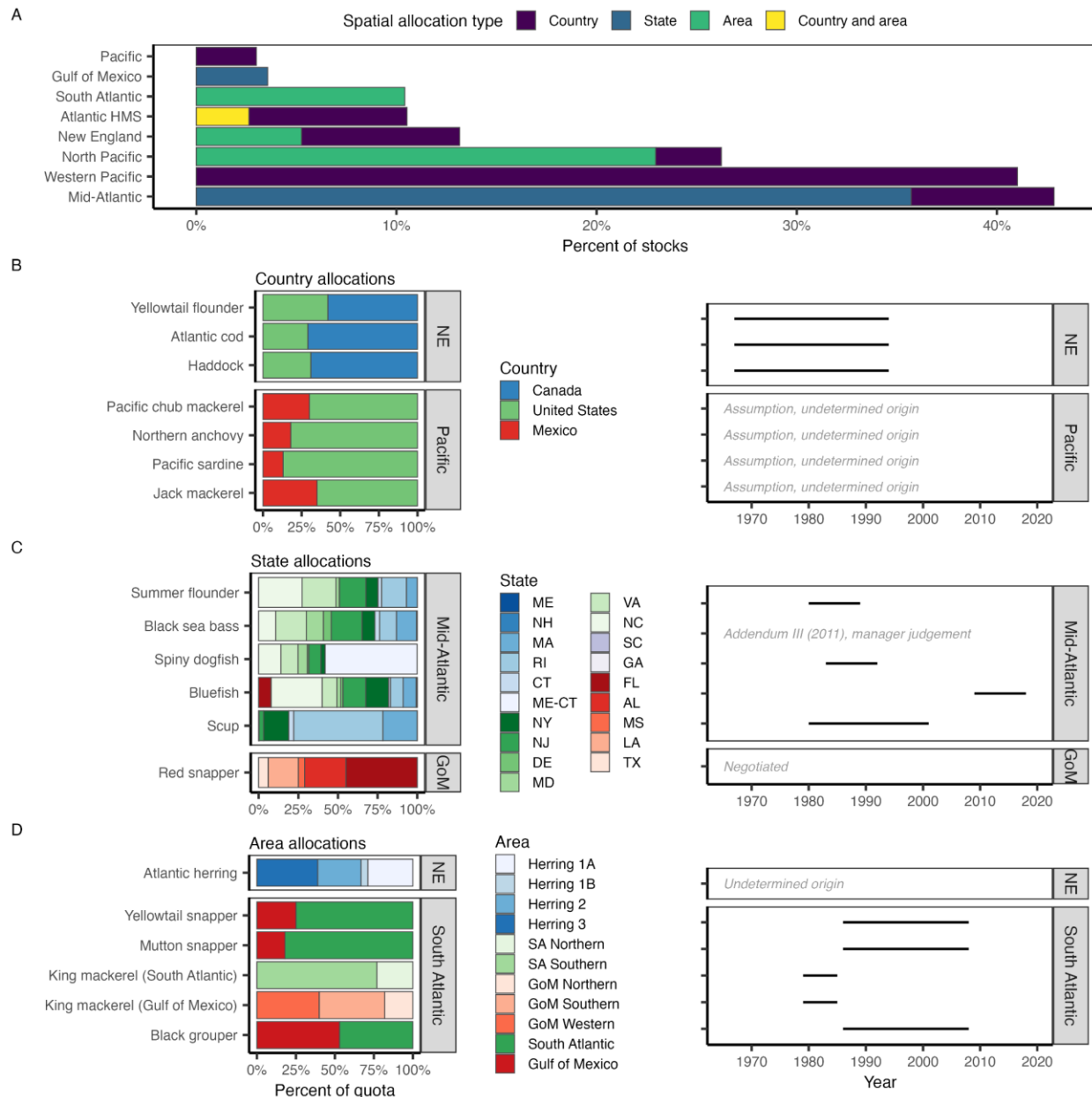
Spatial allocation policies are used in the management of 12% (n=57 stocks) of federally managed stocks (**Figure 3**). The only regions without country-based spatial allocations of transnational stocks are the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean (**Figure 4A**). The lack of country-based allocations in the South Atlantic is likely due to its distance from an international border (**Figure 1**). The lack of country-based allocations in the Gulf of Mexico, which neighbors Mexico, and in the Caribbean, which neighbors many island nations, is likely due to (1) a lack of data to quantify the transnational distribution of resources and (2) the regional prevalence of reef fish, which exhibit higher site fidelity and more granular population structure than other fish taxa (Biggs & Nemeth, 2016; Carson et al., 2011; Coleman et al., 1999). In the Pacific, country-based allocations for coastal pelagic species are based on fixed percentages (**Figure 4B**), despite awareness that these stocks experience dynamic shifts in distribution as a response to oceanographic conditions (Pozo Buil et al., 2021). In New England, country-based allocations for Eastern Georges Bank haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*, Gadidae), Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*, Gadidae), and yellowtail



flounder (*Pleuronectes ferruginea*, Pleuronectidae) are jointly managed by the U.S. and Canada through the Transboundary Management Guidance Committee (TMGC). The TMGC determines annual allocations for all three species by combining both historical landings and current resource distribution according to fisheries independent trawl surveys (Andrushchenko et al., 2022). This approach is climate-adaptive because it annually adapts to climate-driven distribution shifts. By retaining the influence of historical landings, it also balances current distributions with historical dependence. The policy was implemented in 2003 weighing historical landings at 40% and current distribution at 60% and changed the weighting in 5% increment until reaching the target 90%-10% landings-distribution in 2010 (Andrushchenko et al., 2022). Such gradual changes, termed “phase ins”, allow time for fleets to adapt to changes in their allocation, which presents a good practice for reducing socioeconomic impacts when changing quota allocation policies.

The Mid-Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico regions are the only regions to allocate quota among constituent states (**Figure 4A**). The North Pacific likely lacks state based-allocations because Alaska is the only state in the region. The lack of state-based spatial allocations in the Pacific is likely because Pacific groundfish stocks are often assumed to have stock structure matching state boundaries and thus have state-specific catch limits (PFMC, 2023b). Although the Western Pacific and Caribbean regions have island territories similar to states (**Figure 1**), they do not use territorial allocations because catch limits are calculated at the island territory level, similar to the approach in the Pacific. Although state-based allocations for Mid-Atlantic bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*, Pomatomidae) are fixed percentages (**Figure 4C**), they are transferable, which increases their adaptiveness to climate-driven shifts in distribution. In contrast, the state-based allocations for Mid-Atlantic black sea bass (*Centropristis striata*, Serranidae) and summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*, Paralichthyidae) are dynamically updated, weighing both historical landings and current distribution or abundance. Specifically, when summer flounder abundance is below 9.55 million pounds, quota is allocated based on the default percentages (**Figure 4C**); when it is above this threshold, the excess quota is allocated in equal shares (with the exception of Maine, New Hampshire, and Delaware, which split 1% of the additional quota above 9.55 million pounds). Black sea bass allocations are even more spatially dynamic: 75% of the quota is allocated using the historical landings-based default percentages and the remaining 25% is regionally allocated based on regional biomass distributions estimated by the most recent stock assessment (**Figure 4C**).

Area allocations are the only spatial allocation strategy used in the South Atlantic and are also widely used in the North Pacific and New England (**Figure 4A**). In the South Atlantic, area allocations divide quota between (1) the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic for black grouper (*Mycteroperca bonaci*, Serranidae), yellowtail snapper (*Ocyurus chrysurus*, Lutjanidae), and mutton snapper (*Lutjanus analis*, Lutjanidae); (2) northern and southern zones for South Atlantic king mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*, Scombridae) and (3) northern, southern, and western zones for Gulf of Mexico king mackerel (**Figure 4D**). In New England, Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*, Clupeidae) quota is allocated among statistical areas (**Figure 4D**) and Atlantic scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*, Pectinidae) quota is allocated among “open access” and “specified access” areas. Finally, in the North Pacific, quota is allocated among various zones and statistical areas.



**FIGURE 4.** The (A) percent of stocks managed with spatial allocation policies by regional Fishery Management Council (FMC) and spatial allocation type and the percent allocations for stocks managed with (B) country-, (C) state-, and (D) area-based spatial allocation policies. In (C), color groups indicate the FMC representing each state: New England (blues), Mid-Atlantic (greens), South Atlantic (purples), and Gulf of Mexico (reds). In (D), color groups indicate the area scheme: herring zones (blues), South Atlantic king mackerel zones (greens), and Gulf of Mexico king mackerel zones (reds). The Atlantic bluefin tuna stock is managed by the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) FMP using both country- and area-based spatial allocations.

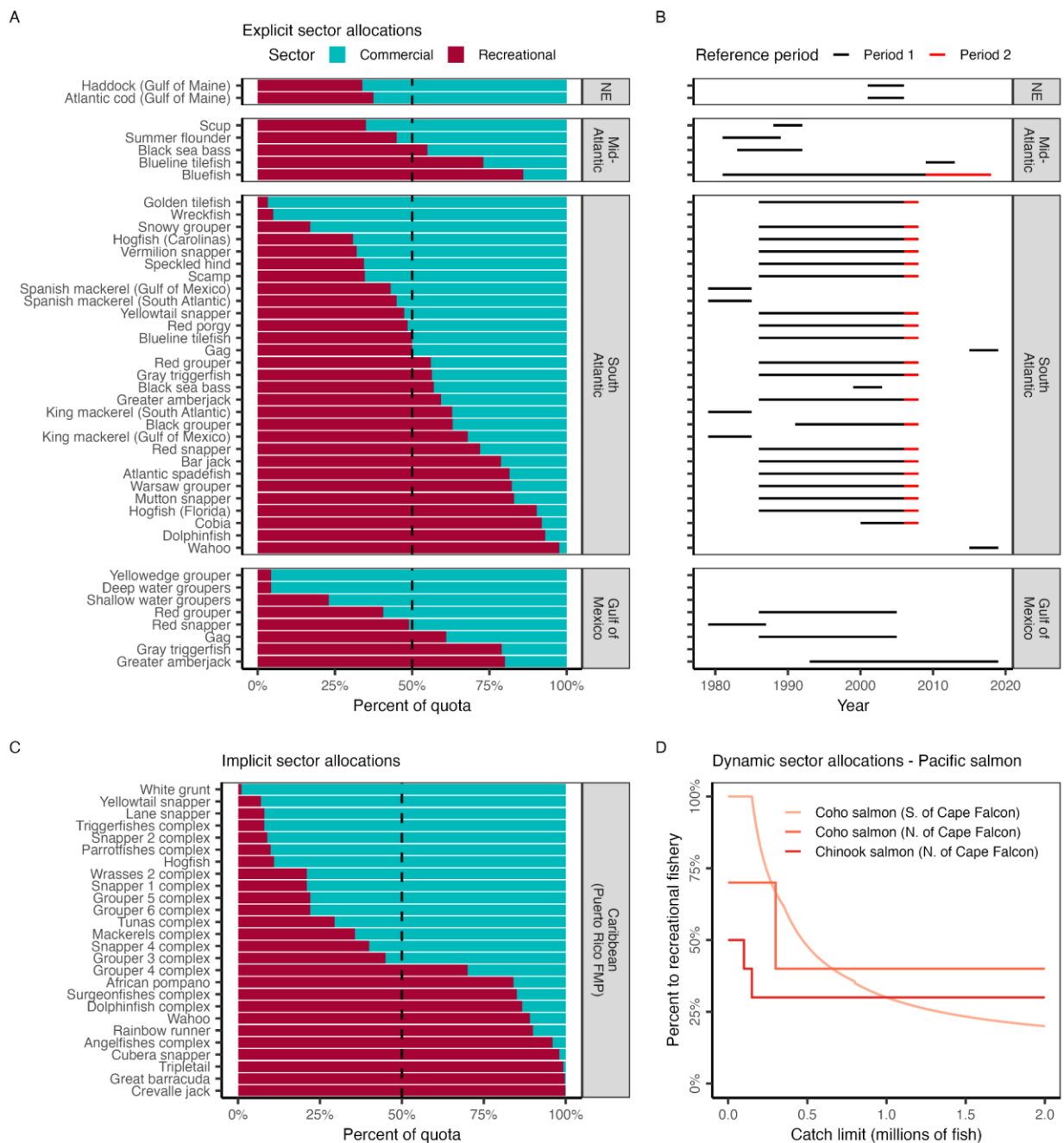
## 2.2.3 Sector allocations

Sector allocations are used in the management of 27% (n=134 stocks) of federally managed stocks (Figure 3). The approach to allocating catch between commercial, recreational, tribal, and research sectors differs widely by region. In the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Mid-Atlantic, which have

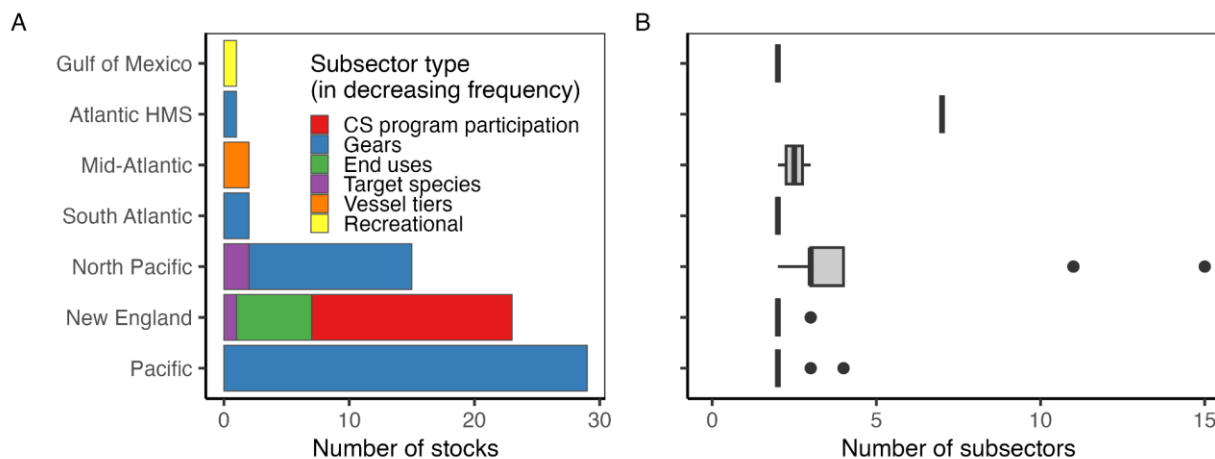
the largest recreational fisheries of the eight management regions (NMFS, 2022) (**Figure 1**), allocations between commercial and recreational sectors are implemented as a fixed percentage of the total allowable catch, which is generally derived based on historical reference periods (**Figure 5AB**). The percentage and reference periods vary by region and stock. In the Caribbean, there are no explicit allocations of quota between commercial and recreational sectors, but the use of a constant catch harvest control rule (Free, Mangin, et al., 2023) represents an implicit allocation policy, as the allocation of catch remains fixed based on historical precedent (**Figure 5C**). In the remaining regions, allocations to the recreational fishery are largely done through “set asides”, which remove projections of the expected recreational catch from the total allowable catch and allocate the remainder to the commercial fishery. The only exceptions are for Gulf of Maine Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*, Gadidae) and haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*, Gadidae) in New England, which are allocated using fixed percentages (**Figure 5A**), and for Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus* spp., Salmonidae), which is allocated using policies that increase the percent allocation to recreational fisheries at low population sizes to ensure reasonable recreational fishing opportunities (**Figure 5D**). Allocations to tribal fisheries and research (e.g., bottom trawl surveys) are also done through set asides.

## 2.2.4 Subsector allocations

Subsector allocations are used in the management of 15% (n=73 stocks) of federally managed stocks (**Figure 3**). They are especially widely used in the New England, North Pacific, and Pacific regions, which support a multitude of different fleets targeting diverse groundfish species (**Figures 3 & 6**). They are not used in the Western Pacific or Caribbean, potentially as a result of insufficient fleet-specific catch data. Subsector allocations are overwhelmingly used to divide catch within the commercial fishing sector (**Figure 6A**). Gulf of Mexico red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*, Lutjanidae), which allocates recreational catch between the for-hire (a.k.a., party boat, head boat, charter boat, 42.3%) and private fleets (57.7%), is the only stock managed using subsector allocations within the recreational sector. Commercial quota for Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod (*Gadus macrocephalus*, Gadidae) is divided between fifteen subsectors, the maximum number of divisions of any subsector-based allocation policy (**Figure 6B**). Within the commercial sector, subsector allocations are divided between fleets that differ in their: catch share program participation (16 stocks), gear type (e.g., longline, gillnet, trap; 16 stocks), end use of catch (e.g., bait or food; 6 stocks), target species (e.g., herring, non-herring; 3 stocks), and vessel tier (e.g., specialists vs. generalists; 2 stocks) (**Figure 6A**). Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*, Scombridae) and golden tilefish (*Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*, Malacanthidae), both managed by the Mid-Atlantic FMC, are the only stocks for which quota is allocated among vessels exhibiting different “tiers” of participation or specialization in the fishery. The Northeast Skate Complex FMP, implemented in New England, allocates catch among vessels targeting skates for bait or for human consumption (“wing” fishery), and is the only FMP to allocate based on end use. The Northeast Multispecies FMP, also implemented in New England, is the only FMP to allocate catch among commercial fleets that do or do not participate in a catch share program.



**FIGURE 5.** Sector-based allocation policies by regional Fishery Management Council (FMC). Panel **A** shows the percent of quota allocated to commercial and recreational fisheries by FMC and stock. Stocks are sorted in order of increasing allocations to recreational fisheries. The vertical dashed line indicates a 50:50 split. Panel **B** shows the reference period used to derive the allocation policy (lines). A few policies weigh the recent time period in addition to the selected reference time period. Panel **C** illustrates the implicit allocation policies resulting from setting fixed catch limits based on historical catch time series for stocks managed by the CFMC Puerto Rico FMP. Panel **D** shows the dynamic sector allocation policies used to vary sector allocations based on salmon stock size for stocks managed by the PFMC Pacific Salmon FMP.



**FIGURE 6.** The (A) number of stocks managed using subsector allocations by regional Fishery Management Council (FMC) and subsector type and (B) number of subsectors included within the subsector allocation policies implemented by each FMC. In (A), all but the “Recreational” subsector type are commercial subsectors. In the boxplots, the solid line indicates the median, the box indicates the interquartile range (IQR; 25th to 75th percentiles), the whiskers indicate 1.5 times the IQR, and points indicate outliers.

## 2.2.5 Catch share allocations

Catch shares are used in the management of 23% (n=111 stocks) of federally managed stocks (**Figure 3**). There are currently 18 catch share programs for federally managed species in the U.S. The first program (Mid-Atlantic: Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog) was implemented in 1990, and the most recent (North Pacific: Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program) in 2024 (**Table 1**). Additionally, in 2000, scallop permit holders in Alaska formed a self-organized, voluntary catch share that is managed through the Weathervane Scallop Cooperative that we include in our analyses. Catch shares are most common in the North Pacific. Currently, neither the Caribbean nor the Western Pacific implement any catch share programs. Initial allocations are typically distributed to active participants in the fishery at the time of program implementation, and are based on best years of landings during a historical reference period (**Figure 7**). However, alternative allocation procedures exist. For example, the Atlantic Sea Scallops IFQ bases allocations on historical landings and vessel size. In the case of the voluntary scallop cooperative program in Alaska, allocations are negotiated on a yearly basis by participants. For highly self-regulated programs such as Al Pollock and Alaska CDQ, allocations are also negotiated internally. In some programs, participants transfer individual allowance (quota, catch history, etc.) to cooperatives or sectors (e.g., “potential sector contribution” for New England Multispecies) on either a mandatory or voluntary basis. Some programs, including the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Non-Pollock (Amendment 80) Cooperative Program and the U.S. Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Longline Individual Bluefin Quota Program, were implemented to manage bycatch of non-target species in a fishery.

Many of the catch share programs in the U.S. share characteristics common to these types of programs. New entrants are uncommon because of the high cost of entry (e.g., cost of buying or leasing quota on top of cost of vessel, gear, gas, etc.). Currently, most programs allow transfers of both quota shares (permanent sale) and annual allocations (temporary lease) among entities. However, quota share caps (holdings cap) and annual allocation caps (use caps) are commonly implemented to limit consolidation (Brinson & Thunberg, 2016). Transfers can act as a mechanism

for entry to a fishery, but quota is often too expensive for this to be feasible for early career fishermen (Holland et al., 2017). To combat this obstacle, programs such as the Gulf of Alaska's Halibut and Sablefish IFQ's Community Quota Entities rely on non-profits to buy quota, and lease it to community members, although these programs tend to be underutilized (Soliman, 2015). Although uncommon, adaptive catch share programs aim to ensure allocation is representative of species distributions and fishery activity, facilitate new entries, and reduce the prevalence of absentee quota owners (Stephen et al., 2019). For example, the West Coast Groundfish Trawl Catch Share Program sets aside 10% of quota to address issues common to catch share programs, but this reserve has consistently been passed-through to IFQ participants because the Pacific FMC has not yet identified ways to address issues with the set-aside quota (NOAA, 2014). Adaptive catch share programs can also allow management to reclaim and redistribute quota, which presents a potential mechanism for adaptively revising allocation policies to better achieve equity and fairness goals under climate change.

### 2.2.6 Seasonal allocations

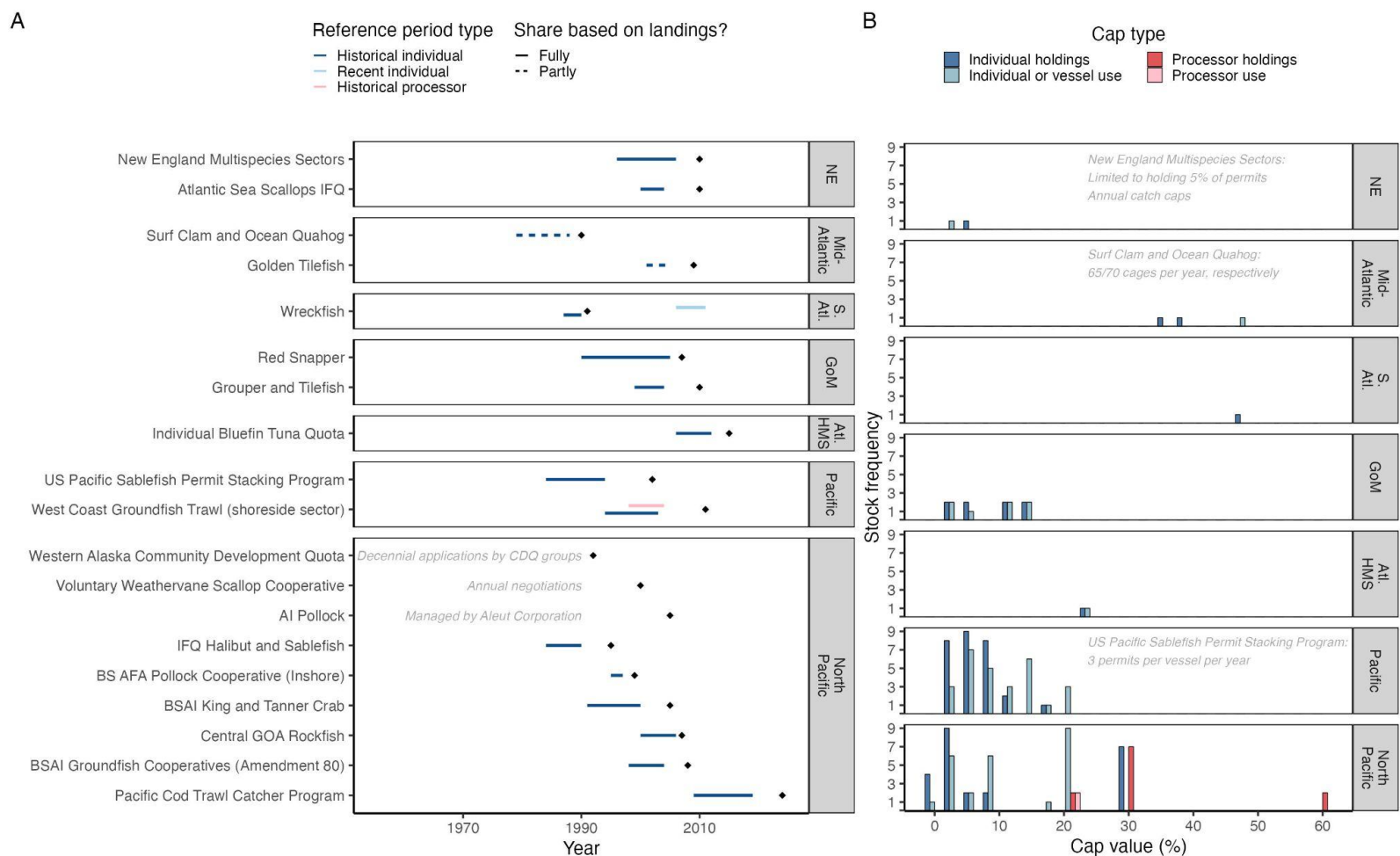
Seasonal quota allocations are only used to manage 7% (n=34 stocks) of federally managed stocks (**Figure 8**). In general, seasonal allocations are used to avoid catch limit overages and to curb the race to fish. A notable exception is the seasonal allocation policy for Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*, Clupeidae), which is used to ensure that the majority of catch comes when the demand for bait for the American lobster (*Homarus americanus*, Nephropidae) fishery is highest and the herring fishery is therefore most profitable. The Atlantic herring allocation policy is also noteworthy because of its flexibility, which makes it climate-adaptive. The policy is determined annually and can be allocated across bi-monthly, trimester, or seasonal periods based on the recommendations of constituent states. Seasonal allocations are most common on the U.S. East Coast (**Figure 8**). On the West Coast, they are only used for Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*, Alosidae) and select species managed by the Bering Sea-Aleutian Island and Gulf of Alaska Groundfish FMPs (not illustrated; percents unknown). Existing seasonal allocations are divided among quarters (e.g., New England silver and red hake), trimesters (e.g., Mid-Atlantic longfin inshore squid), or seasons (e.g., South Atlantic king mackerel) (**Figure 8**).

**TABLE 1.** Catch share programs by regional Fishery Management Council (FMC).

Program	Year
<i>Atlantic HMS</i>	
Individual Bluefin Tuna Quota	2015
<i>New England</i>	
Atlantic Sea Scallops IFQ	2010
New England Multispecies Sectors	2010
<i>Mid-Atlantic</i>	
Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog	1990
Golden Tilefish	2009
<i>South Atlantic</i>	
Wreckfish	1991
<i>Gulf of Mexico</i>	
Red Snapper	2007
Grouper and Tilefish	2010
<i>Pacific</i>	
Pacific Sablefish Permit Stacking	2001
West Coast Groundfish Trawl Rationalization	2011
<i>North Pacific</i>	
Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program	1992
Individual Fishing Quota Halibut and Sablefish	1995
Bering Sea AFA Pollock Cooperative	1999
Weathervane Scallop Cooperative*	2000
Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crab	2005
Aleutian Islands Pollock	2005
Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish (Non-Pollock) Cooperatives - Amendment 80	2008
Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish	2011
Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program	2024

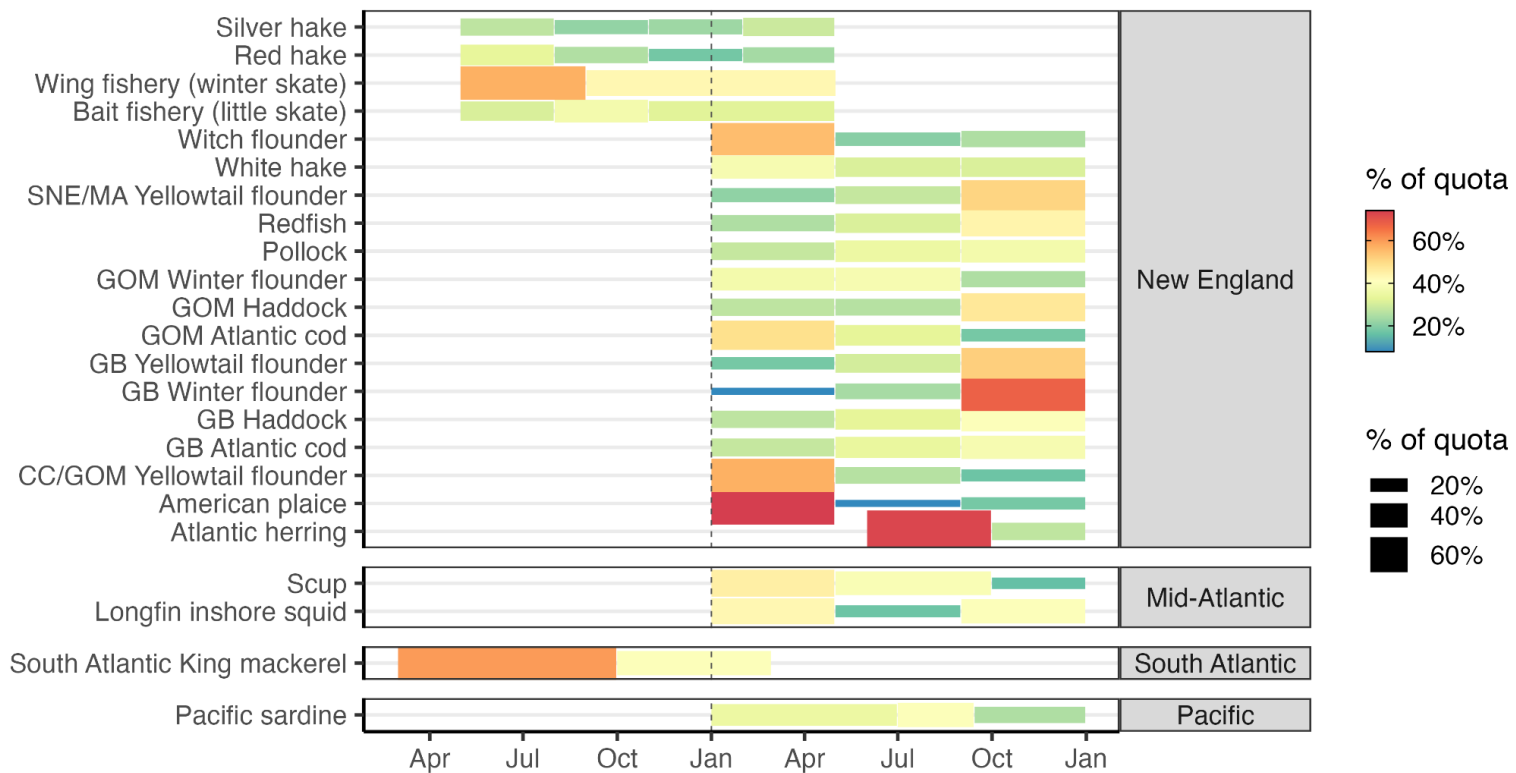
\* The Weathervane Scallop Cooperative is a voluntary program and is not listed on the NOAA Catch Share website (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/sustainable-fisheries/catch-shares>). Our inclusion of this program and the recently added Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program is why we arrive at 19 rather than 17 catch share programs.





**FIGURE 7.** The (A) reference period and year of implementation (diamond) for allocations by program and regional Fishery Management Council (FMC) and (B) stock frequency distribution of holding and use caps by FMC. In (A) reference periods are colored by type (historical vs. recent, individual vs. processor). Programs with reference periods are sorted by implementation year. In 2012, inactive wreckfish quota was redistributed using a recent reference period (light blue). Dashed lines highlight programs in which shares are partly rather than fully based on landings (for Golden Tilefish, also depends on tier; for Surf Clam and Quahog, also depends on vessel size). Gray text explains protocol for programs that do not use landings to determine shares. Reference period can vary by species (New England Multispecies) and permit (Pacific Cod Trawl Catcher Program), therefore most common reference period is illustrated. In (B) cap value frequencies are colored by cap type (holding vs. use, individual vs. processor). Protocol for programs with non percent-based caps described in gray text. Crew, catcher/processor, and cooperative caps are rare and therefore excluded. The Weathervane Scallop Cooperative, W. AK Community Development Quota, and AI Pollock do not employ caps, and are therefore excluded. Halibut is excluded from IFQ Halibut and Sablefish because it is managed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. Bars are offset by 3 when necessary for visualization.





**FIGURE 8.** Seasonal allocations of stocks by regional Fishery Management Council. Blocks indicate the temporal extent of each season and block size and color indicate the percent of quota allocated to that season.

## 3. ALLOCATION POLICIES IN INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES

To broaden our search for climate-adaptive quota allocation policies, we supplemented our systematic review of allocation policies used in U.S. federal fisheries management with a brief review of allocation policies used in other fisheries around the world. The following section provides a brief overview of the quota allocation policies used in two countries and one international fishery whose allocation policies have been well summarized in a single source (i.e., an exhaustive review is not required to generate a comprehensive understanding of each entity's allocation policies). The selected vignettes and their key references are as follows: Australia (Knuckey et al., 2019; Mazur et al., 2020; McShane et al., 2021), New Zealand (Lock & Leslie, 2007), and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) for Pacific skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*, Scombridae) (Aqorau et al., 2018). The successes and failures of these allocation policies are highly instructive to the U.S. and any other country that allocates quota.

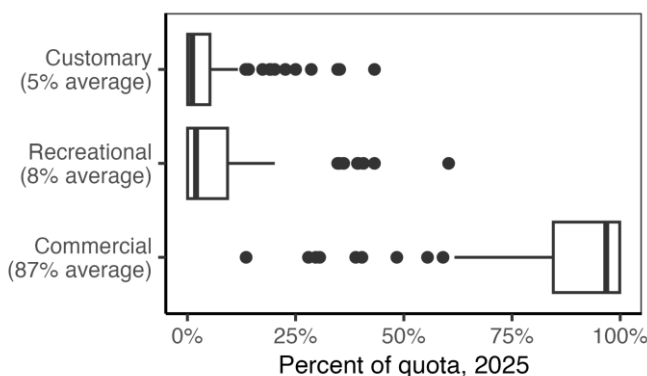
### 3.1 Australia

Australian allocation policies vary widely across subnational jurisdictions (states and territories). In 2010, the Australian Fisheries Managers Forum identified allocation as one the most important policy issues to address (AFMF, 2010). In response, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation formed a working group to synthesize existing allocation policies and provide recommendations for reform (FRDC, 2012). The working group report found that all jurisdictions except Western Australia and South Australia lacked clear policies for guiding allocation decisions (Neville, 2012). In 2016, another government report concluded that *“the basis for allocation is often opaque, uncertain, and/or of questionable efficiency”* and that *“stated policy objectives include multiple and sometimes competing goals that often provide limited guidance on how judgements should be made”* (Productivity Commission, 2016). Since these reports, Queensland, New South Wales, and Northern Territory have written allocation policies but have yet to implement them. Victoria and Tasmania have yet to write an allocation policy (Knuckey et al., 2019). In Western Australia and South Australia, sector allocations are made between commercial, recreational, and Indigenous fleets, and have largely been set based on historical catch, despite the fact that these allocation plans recognize the importance of social, cultural, and economic values in making allocation decisions (Smyth et al., 2018). A lack of data on Indigenous catch has led to a default allocation of 1% to Indigenous fishermen for most fisheries with sector allocations, which is analogous to the *“de minimis”* allocations employed by the U.S. Mid-Atlantic FMC. However, the South Australia management plan for Goolwa pipi (*Latona deltoidea*, Donacidae), a small saltwater clam, allows for trading between sectors, and the Indigenous allocation has reached as high as 25% of the catch. A 2021 review of all Australian allocation policies found no examples of subsector allocations, which it described as being difficult to implement due to its controversial political nature (McShane et al., 2021). In several jurisdictions, panels of independent experts and fishing industry representatives are convened to make or adjust allocation policies (Mazur et al., 2020). These reviews can be triggered when there is sufficient stakeholder feedback, when a sector exceeds its allocation, or when the management plan is reviewed or changed substantially. If the panel determines a review is necessary based on the collected evidence, which includes information on historical catch, current allocation and management practices, and species biology, the panel makes recommendations to the minister of the relevant department, who makes the ultimate decision. This

process is similar to NOAA guidelines for U.S. allocation policy reviews (W. Morrison, 2016a, 2017b), except for its use of an independent panel to make unbiased judgements.

## 3.2 New Zealand

The majority of New Zealand's harvested marine species are managed through the Quota Management System (QMS), which is the national program under which catch limits are set and allocated between commercial, recreational, and customary fishery sectors (Lock & Leslie, 2007). Customary fisheries are managed by *tangata whenua* (people of the land with authority in a particular *rohe moana* [fishing area]) for non-commercial food gathering and were secured by the Treaty of Waitangi (Fisheries Claims) Settlement Act 1992. The allocation between sectors varies by species (Fisheries of New Zealand, 2024a) but is generally dominated by the commercial sector (**Figure 9**). Within the commercial sector, quota is allocated among commercial fishers that individually own Annual Catch Entitlements (ACEs) in the QMS catch share system. ACEs may be sold or leased, but there are species-specific maximum holding limits to curtail aggregation, diversify ownership, and promote pathways for entering the fishery. There are also minimum holdings limits (Fisheries of New Zealand, 2024b), which are presumably used to reduce complexity, increase attainment, and/or encourage stewardship, though we cannot find a stated motivation for these limits. Initial allocations were made based on each vessel owner's catch history (i.e., owner's choice of catch from the 1981/82, 82/83, or 83/84 season) and negotiations through a complex appeal process. When first introduced in 1986, these allocations were made as a fixed tonnage based on the Government's misguided belief that catch limits would only increase with improved management (Lock & Leslie, 2007). However, in 1990, the near collapse of the orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*, Trachichthyidae) fishery led the Government to convert shares to a fixed proportion, based on quota owners holdings at the time of the transition. In the interim years, the Government bought back surplus quota when the sum of quota exceeded the catch limit, which was predictably expensive and inefficient. The Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, were excluded from the initial commercial quota allocation process. The 1996 Fisheries Act determined that the Māori would be allocated 20% of the commercial quota for all new species added to the QMS and the remainder would be allocated to fishing permit holders based on their catch history. In 2022, the Māori were reported to own 33% of commercial quota (47% by value) and 100% of the customary quota (Hudson, 2022).



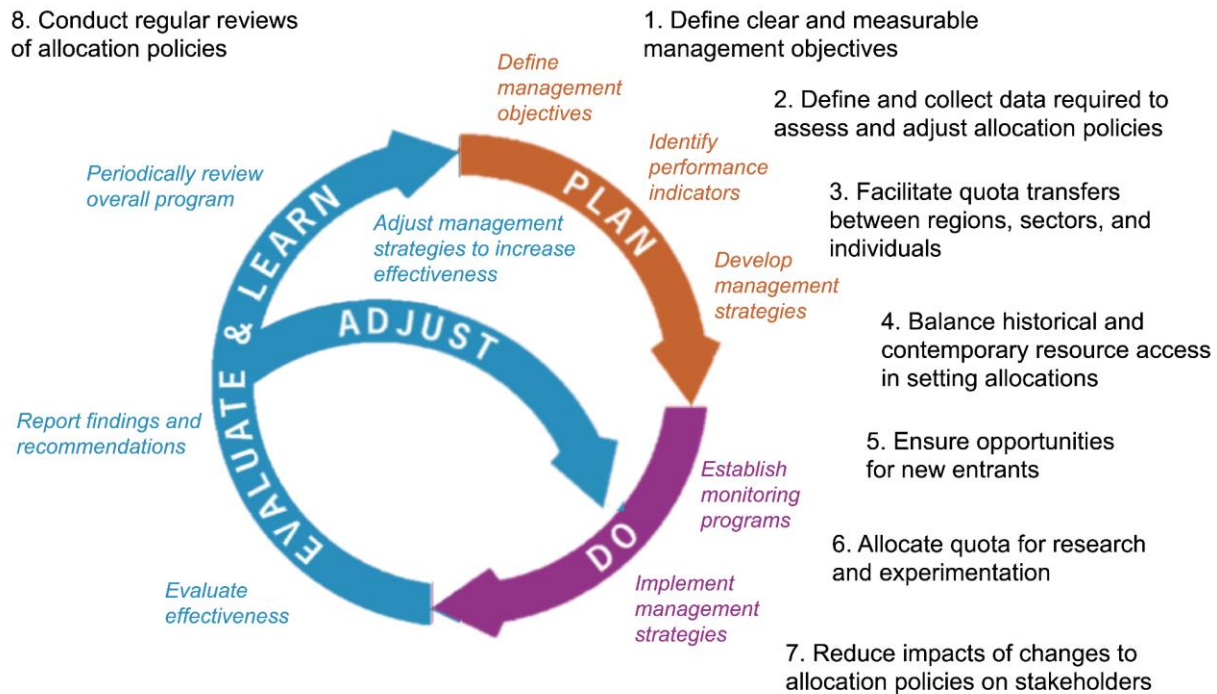
**FIGURE 9.** Quota allocation percentages among sectors for the 98 species managed within New Zealand's Quota Management System in 2025 (Fisheries of New Zealand, 2024a). In the boxplots, the solid line indicates the median, the box indicates the interquartile range (IQR; 25th to 75th percentiles), the whiskers indicate 1.5 times the IQR, and points indicate outliers.

### 3.3 Pacific Island skipjack tuna

The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) (PNA Tuna, 2010), which governs the management of skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*, Scombridae) in nine Pacific Island countries, has been heralded as one of the best climate-adaptive spatial allocation systems (Aqorau et al., 2018). The PNA's "vessel day scheme" (VDS) (PNA Tuna, 2011) was explicitly developed to cooperatively manage this highly migratory species as it shifts its distribution across the waters of PNA members due to changing oceanographic conditions. The VDS is a "cap and trade" system that sets the total annual purse-seine fishing effort at ~45,000 days and allocates these days to member countries based on the area of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and the preceding 7-8 years of catch. Importantly, the VDS also provides a pathway for PNA members to trade quota in response to El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). During the La Niña phase of ENSO, the catch is concentrated in the west, whereas during the El Niño phase, the catch is concentrated in the east (Lehodey et al., 1997). With trading, the VDS allows countries to purchase fishing days when tuna are located in their region and sell fishing days when tuna are located elsewhere. In this way, the VDS allows member countries to profit regardless of where skipjack tuna are caught that year. This system is expected to provide community resilience as skipjack tuna shift east due to directional climate change (Bell et al., 2013). The expectation is that, over time, PNA countries in the east will gradually receive greater allocations as their catch history increases relative to countries in the west, and countries in the west will be compensated for these directional losses through the annual leasing of their remaining allocation (Aqorau et al., 2018).

## 4. BEST PRACTICES FOR CLIMATE-ADAPTIVE ALLOCATION POLICIES

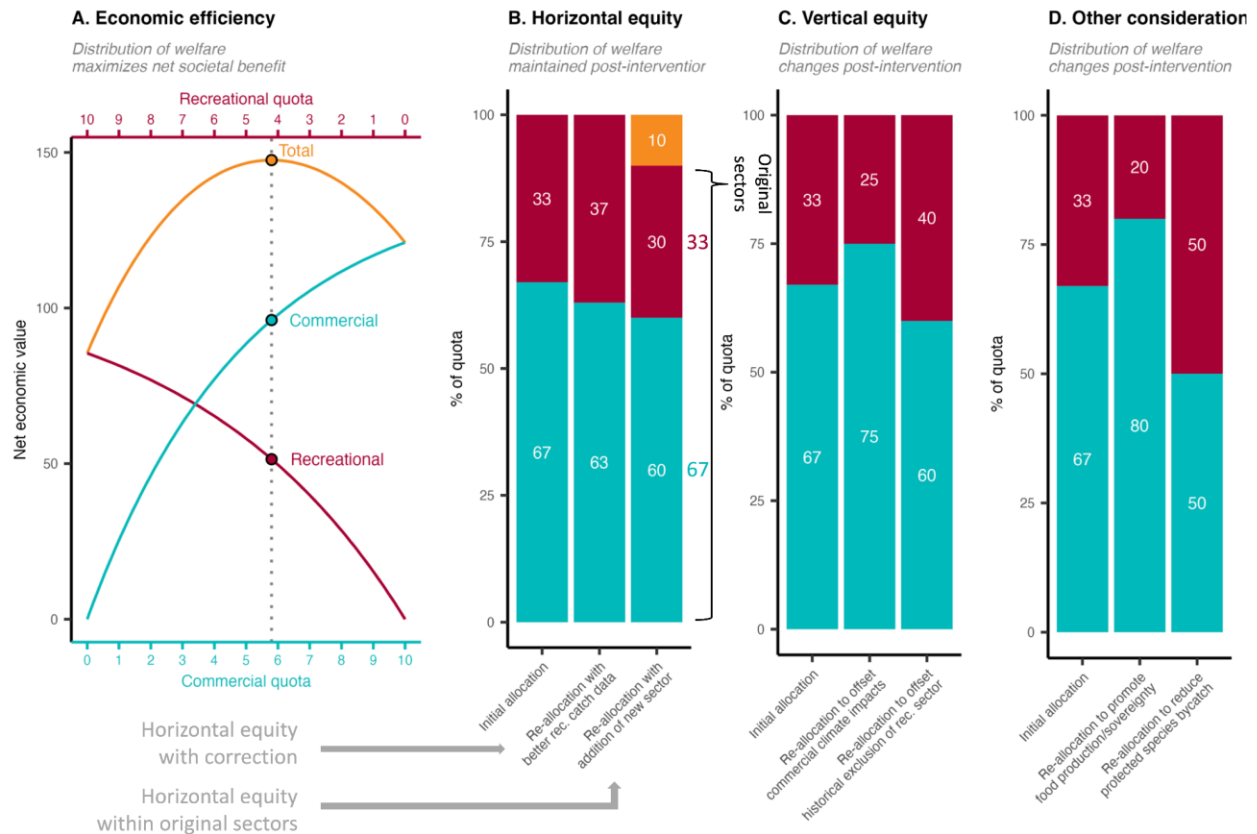
Based on our systematic review of U.S. allocation policies and informal review of international policies and the scientific literature, we identified eight best practices for implementing or enhancing the adaptive management of quota allocation policies (**Figure 10**). Adaptive management, which periodically reviews and updates management strategies to ensure that management objectives are being met (Walters & Hilborn, 1976), provides inherent climate resilience by ensuring that management is responsive to changing conditions (Bahri et al., 2021). These best practices are to: (1) define clear and measurable management objectives; (2) define and collect data required to assess and adjust allocation policies; (3) facilitate quota transfers between regions, sectors, and individuals; (4) balance historical and contemporary resource access in setting allocations; (5) ensure opportunities for new entrants; (6) allocate quota for research and experimentation; (7) reduce impacts of changes to allocation policies on stakeholders; and (8) conduct regular reviews of allocation policies. We detail these recommendations in the sections below.



**FIGURE 10.** A conceptual diagram illustrating the eight best practices (black text) for enhancing the adaptive management of quota allocation policies.

## 4.1 Define clear and measurable management objectives

The adaptive management of quota allocation policies depends on the definition of clear and measurable management objectives (Plummer et al., 2012). Without these, managers will be unable to track whether objectives are being met or determine if adjustments are necessary, which is especially problematic as climate-driven changes in resource availability accelerate the need for policy modifications. We recommend that each FMP/FEP or other relevant policy document (e.g., catch share policy) define allocation objectives, discuss tradeoffs between competing objectives (Heen et al., 2014; Mardle et al., 2000), and identify data sources that can be used to monitor progress towards the objectives (see *section 4.2* for more details). Adaptive management of allocation policies provides inherent climate resilience by ensuring that policies are regularly revisited to ensure that they are achieving their objectives as both oceanographic and socioeconomic conditions change. There may also be opportunities to explicitly incorporate climate change into allocation policy objectives. For example, allocation could be used as a tool for mitigating the negative impacts of climate change, especially on vulnerable communities, by allocating the most climate-vulnerable communities (Colburn et al., 2016; Himes-Cornell & Kasperski, 2015; Koehn et al., 2022) more quota than their historical share (**Figure 11C**). While allocations have historically sought to maintain “horizontal equity” where allocations are proportional to historical access (**Figure 11B**), the Magnuson-Stevens Act and associated guidelines leave the door open for alternative definitions of equity (W. Morrison, 2016b). For example, managers could set goals for “vertical equity” (**Figure 11C**) and use allocation as a tool for compensating communities disadvantaged by historical allocations or by the impacts of contemporary or future climate change (Kourantidou et al., 2021).



**FIGURE 11.** An illustration of alternative conceptualizations of equity in quota allocation policies. Panel **A** illustrates an allocation policy that seeks to optimize economic efficiency by maximizing the net economic benefits of commercial and recreational fisheries. The optimal policy is marked by the vertical dotted line. Panel **B** illustrates a suite of allocation policies that seek to maintain “horizontal equity” whereby the distribution of welfare remains proportional to historical levels. Column 1 shows the initial allocation based on historical catch. Column 2 illustrates a scenario in which the policy is updated with improved estimates of historical recreational catches. Although it results in a different distribution of welfare relative to the initial policy, it is motivated by the same goals (but uses better data) and is therefore still an example of horizontal equity. Column 3 illustrates a scenario in which a historically omitted subsistence sector (orange) is given access. The losses in allocation to the original sectors are proportional; thus, horizontal equity is maintained. Panel **C** illustrates a suite of allocation policies that seek to achieve “vertical equity” whereby the distribution of welfare changes after an intervention in a way considered more fair. This could be to compensate communities disadvantaged by historical allocations (column 2) or by the impacts of contemporary or future climate change (column 3). Panel **D** illustrates how managers could adjust allocation policies to achieve other fisheries objectives, such as promoting food production and sovereignty by prioritizing commercial fishing (column 2) or reducing bycatch of protected species by prioritizing more selective recreational fisheries (column 3). Although these adjustments change the distribution of welfare, they are not motivated by equity and fairness between sectors (though they do relate to broader societal concepts of fairness) and therefore do not qualify as vertical equity. We illustrate these concepts using sector allocations as an example, but all these concepts apply to any allocation between harvesting entities (states, subsectors, individuals, etc).

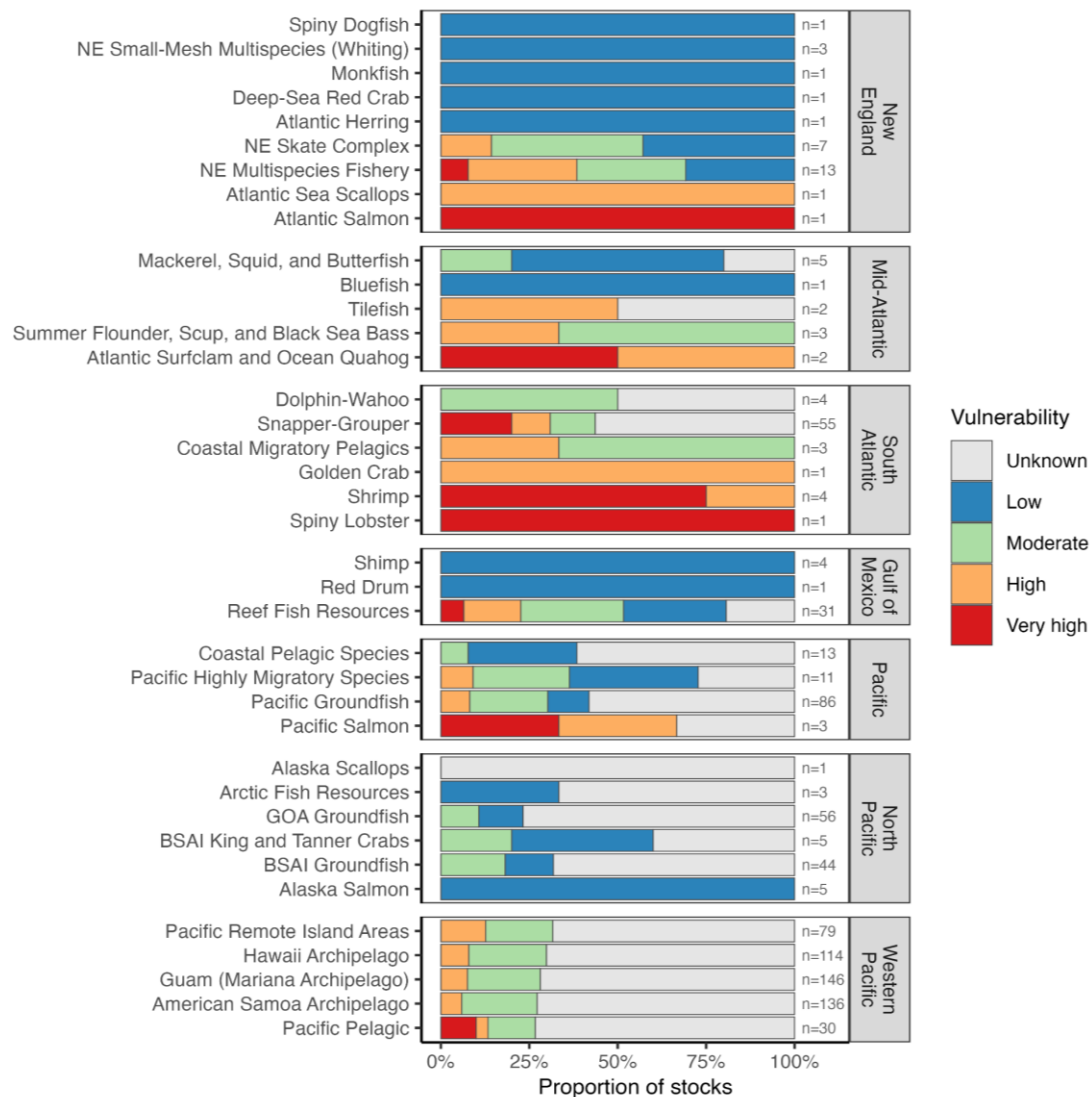


## 4.2 Define and collect data required to assess and adjust allocation policies

The adaptive management process hinges on the definition and evaluation of indicators for tracking management performance and for determining when adjustments need to be made to management strategies or even management objectives (Walters, 2007). This requires resources to be directed to data collection and analysis that can inform whether allocations are achieving their objectives and subsequently guide revisions if they are not. The following list of potential indicators is not comprehensive but illustrates some of the data types that could be useful for tracking performance. First, catch reporting and monitoring should be specific enough to evaluate attainment (i.e., the percent of the allocation caught annually) among the entities allocated catch. If rigorous catch monitoring is established and a specific entity (e.g., state, sector, subsector, etc.) is consistently under its quota, then reallocation of that quota to another entity, especially if that entity consistently meets its quota, may be justified. Second, reliable estimates of recreational catch, which is notoriously challenging to quantify, and well-designed and well-supported survey methods (National Academy, 2006) are necessary to ensure fair access for this sector (Ryan et al., 2016). Third, reliable estimates of discards may be necessary to determine whether the current allocation is using the resource efficiently and minimizing waste and ecosystem impacts. Fourth, demographic information on fishery participants throughout the supply chain – ranging from owners, captains, crew, processors, and dealers – especially on vulnerable groups, is necessary for evaluating equity and fairness (NAS, 2024). Fifth, knowledge of species distributions, which may require coordination across states, FMCs, and even nations, will involve collection, curation, and analysis of fisheries-independent survey data (see DisMAP as example; (NOAA Fisheries, 2024a)). Sixth, regional Climate Vulnerability Assessments (W. E. Morrison et al., 2015, 2016; NOAA Fisheries, 2024b) should be revisited to ensure the inclusion of all federally managed species (**Figure 12**) to better support the consideration of climate vulnerability in allocation decisions. Finally, to effectively consider habitat impacts of a gear, protected species bycatch, or other factors in making allocations, data must be collected to inform these judgements. Ultimately, the data collected should be aligned with management objectives; a management objective may prove ineffective if it is not measurable or is not actively measured.

## 4.3 Facilitate quota transfers between regions, sectors, and individuals

The ability for quota owners to transfer quota access rights – either temporarily through leasing or permanently through sale – provides flexibility for fishermen to adapt to climate change and other shocks (Tokunaga et al., 2023). The temporary transfer of quota access through leasing provides in-season flexibility and the ability for fishermen to rapidly respond to changes in ways that are more self-governed. The permanent transfer of quota access provides a mechanism for fishermen who have lost access to a resource to be compensated and provides capital necessary for adapting to this loss of livelihood provisioning. While the ability to transfer quota between individuals is a feature of most catch share programs, the ability to transfer quota between states, sectors, and subsectors is less common, which presents a key opportunity to enhance climate resilience. As one example, limited ability to transfer or lease quota between the at-sea and inshore Bering Sea pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*, *Gadidae*) sector have limited the fisheries ability to respond to changes in species distributions, bycatch management, and market dynamics (Criddle & Strong, 2013). These programs



**FIGURE 12.** The climate vulnerability of targeted species managed by each Fishery Management Plan (FMP) or Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) based on regional Climate Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs). FMP/FEPs are grouped by regional Fishery Management Council and are ordered by the average climate vulnerability of target species managed by the FMP/FEP. The number of species in the FMP/FEP is printed in gray text.

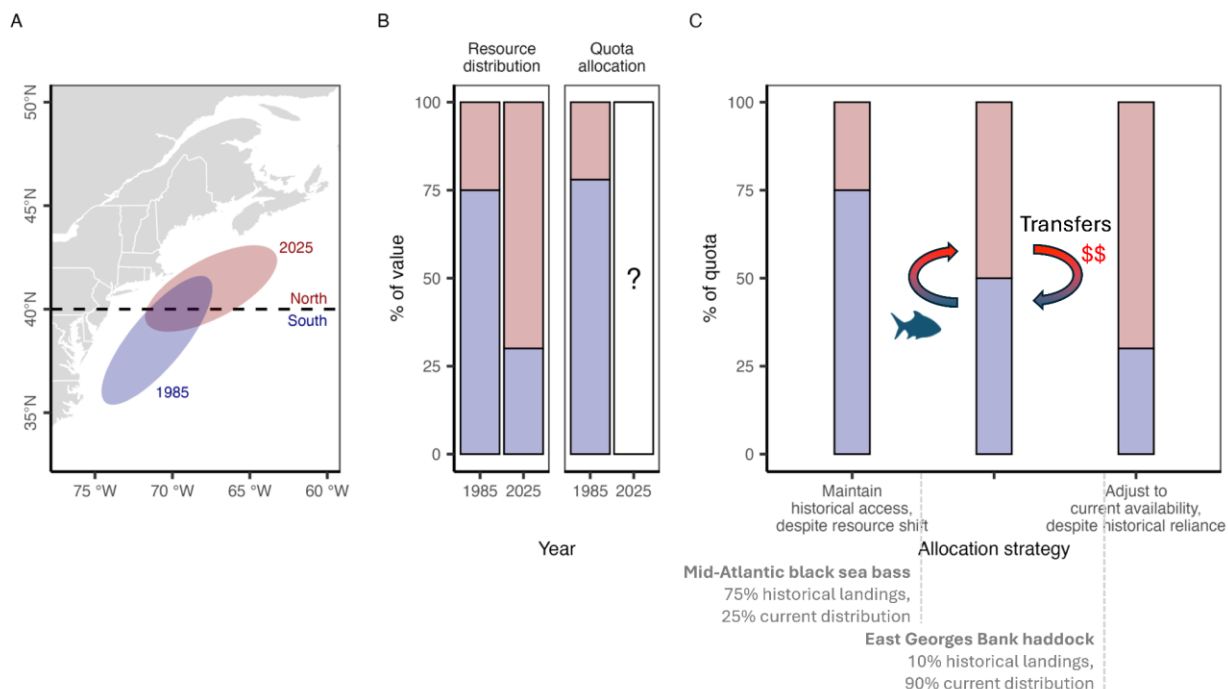
could be modeled after Mid-Atlantic bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*, Pomatomidae), which allows for in-season transfers between the commercial and recreational sectors and between states, and Mid-Atlantic black sea bass (*Centropristis striata*, Serranidae) and summer flounder (*Paralichthys dentatus*, Paralichthyidae), which also allows for transfers between states. In catch share programs, a key risk in allowing transfers is the consolidation of quota among a few individual entities, some of which may no longer actively fish or even reside in the community; however, this adverse outcome can be curbed through the use of allocation caps that limit the percent of quota that can be possessed or used by an individual entity (Brinson & Thunberg, 2016). This is consistent with National Standard 4, which requires that “no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share of such privileges” (§ 600.325 National Standard 4—Allocations, 1998). The transferability of quota also serves to: (1) increase economic efficiency, by ensuring that quota



aggregates among those with easiest access to the resource; (2) promote conservation, by ensuring that fishing effort occurs in proportion to biomass, thereby avoiding the local depletion that could occur if quota remained tied to areas with declining abundance (Pinsky & Fogarty, 2012); and (3) provide a mechanism for fishermen losing access to be directly compensated and for fishermen gaining access to capitalize on emerging resources, which could compensate for climate-driven losses in other fisheries in their portfolio (Cline et al., 2017; Samhouri et al., 2024). Finally, the ability to transfer quota is aligned with resilience principles that encourage self-governance and flexibility (Mason et al., 2022).

## 4.4 Balance historical and contemporary resource access in setting allocations

The adaptation of allocation policies to climate-driven changes in resource distribution will require weighing both historical and contemporary access to resources (**Figure 13**). The tendency for current allocation policies to interpret equity as the maintenance of historical access is unlikely to meet fisheries objectives as stocks shift in their availability. A failure to adjust allocations in response to these shifts could undermine (1) fairness and equity, by preventing those with growing local fisheries from benefiting from these gains, (2) efficiency, by requiring vessels to travel further to access the resource, which increases costs, safety concerns, and carbon emissions (Papaioannou et al., 2021; Scherrer et al., 2024); and (3) conservation, by promoting local depletion if quota holders continue to fish in areas at the trailing edge of a shifting distribution (Pinsky & Fogarty, 2012). However, at the other end of the spectrum, fully adjusting allocation policies in response to contemporary or projected changes in resource distributions could also introduce fairness and equity challenges by reducing access for stakeholders who have historically relied on the resource (Palacios-Abrantes et al., 2023). Thus, adjusting allocations by weighing both historical and contemporary resource access may present a useful compromise, especially when quota is transferable (see *section 4.3*). This can be achieved by calculating allocation percentages by weighing historical landings with recent landings (e.g., sector allocations in the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery) or with current biomass distribution as estimated from either a survey (e.g., area allocations in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery) or an assessment model (e.g., state allocations in the Mid-Atlantic black sea bass commercial fishery). Among these approaches, we recommend weighing current conditions based on the distribution of the resource, as the distribution of the catch lags behind resource shifts and is inherently limited by existing allocation policies and management regulations (Pinsky & Fogarty, 2012). Additionally, we recommend quantifying distribution shifts using fisheries-independent surveys given the high temporal and spatial resolution of these surveys (Maureaud et al., 2024) compared to stock assessments, which are updated less regularly (e.g., every 2-10 years; (Neubauer et al., 2018)) and represent coarse spatial structure. Ultimately, the weight assigned to historical and contemporary access is a policy decision that should be explicitly linked to policy objectives, but in general, we recommend that historical access be favored for static stocks and that contemporary access be favored for shifting stocks. In the Mid-Atlantic, scientists and managers have begun to explore the viability of an automated “dynamic allocation” procedure that uses both current distributions and historical catch to update allocations for shifting stocks without requiring renegotiations and time intensive FMP amendments (Vogel et al., 2024).



**FIGURE 13.** A conceptual schematic illustrating the spectrum of allocation options available to managers as stocks shift distributions and their availability to fisheries under climate change. Panel **A** illustrates the shift in distribution of hypothetical stock from 1985 to 2025 relative to a hypothetical management boundary. Panel **B** illustrates the proportional distribution of the resource between the two management zones in 1985 and 2025. The allocation of quota between the zones roughly matches the 1985 distribution because it was established based on 1980-1985 catch distribution. Managers must now decide whether and how to adjust the quota allocation given the climate-driven shift in distribution. Panel **C** illustrates the spectrum of options available to managers. On one end of the spectrum, managers could maintain historical access despite the resource shift. This protects historical access for southern zone fishermen but introduces inefficiencies, risks local depletion, and is unfair to northern zone fishermen. On the other end of the spectrum, managers could fully adjust to current resource distribution. This is efficient and aligned with conservation goals but does not protect historical dependence and is therefore unfair to southern fishermen. As a result, managers may wish to find a middle ground between these two extremes. Examples of allocation policies that fall in middleground are highlighted. Furthermore, allowing transfers between zones provides a mechanism for northern fishers to gain access and for southern fishers to be compensated for lost access.

## 4.5 Ensure opportunities for new entrants

Any policy that allocates natural resources among harvesters should consider new entrants seeking to gain access to the resource (Cox, 2009). The initial capital required to obtain commercial fishing permits, quota, gear, and/or vessels limits new participants (Cullenberg et al., 2017). These barriers are particularly steep in fisheries with catch shares or other forms of limited entry programs, and have played a role in the ‘graying of the fleet,’ or the increased average age of commercial fishermen (Cramer et al., 2018). Climate change is likely to exacerbate the new entrant problem as climate-driven shifts in the distribution of fish and invertebrates will make the resource available to new regions, sectors, and individuals (Pinsky et al., 2018). A pathway for providing access to these new participants is critical for increasing economic efficiency, perceptions of fairness, and the stability of allocation decisions (Cox, 2009). Access for new entrants could be catalyzed through set asides reserved for new entrants or through quota and/or permit banks that ease access for new

participants. For example, through the Adaptive Management Program (AMP; Amendment 20 of the Pacific Groundfish FMP) the Pacific FMC sets aside quota from the groundfish catch share program in a “public trust pool” that can be used to support conservation, new entrants, community stability, or to compensate for unintended consequences of the catch share program (PFMC & NMFS, 2010). Unfortunately, the program has yet to be used and instead AMP quota has been passed to fishermen in proportion with quota share holding, limiting insights into both the benefits and pitfalls of new entrant set asides (Nayani & Warlick, 2018). The leasing of quota or permits to new participants through fisheries trusts (banks), potentially at rates lower than they would receive from a traditional owner, can help new entrants gain experience and capital before buying quota or permits themselves (Kauer et al., 2024). For example, in 2010, the Maine Department of Marine Resources purchased eleven federal Northeast Multispecies permits, which it leases to fishermen through the Maine Groundfish Permit Bank (Maine DMR, 2022). Other examples include the Alaska Community Quota Entities, which lease groundfish and crab quota to catch share members (NPFMC, 2016) and the Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust, which leases groundfish quota at reduced rates to local fishermen (Kauer et al., 2024). Finally, quota transfers (see *section 4.3*) are a useful tool for fishermen seeking to expand their participation in an emerging fishery, which can enhance climate resilience if other fisheries in their portfolios are experiencing climate-driven declines (Cline et al., 2017; Samhoury et al., 2024).

## 4.6 Allocate quota for research and experimentation

The allocation of quota towards programs that support research and experimentation could incentivize adaptive innovation in response to climate change. This could include the reservation of quota for existing programs such as “research set asides” (RSAs) or for “exempted fishing permits” (EFPs). Research set asides, which have only been used by the New England and Mid-Atlantic FMCs, represent a portion of quota that is set aside for vessels engaged in scientific research. The set-aside quota is awarded through a competitive grant process and the sale of the associated catch both funds the research and compensates the vessels supporting the research (NOAA, 2024). These programs have been especially successful for high value stocks such as Atlantic scallops (*Placopecten magellanicus*, Pectinidae) and monkfish (*Lophius americanus*, Lophiidae) in New England (Vogel et al. 2024), where they have supported innovative research on climate change and population dynamics, improved survey methods, and bycatch avoidance (NOAA, 2024). The program in the Mid-Atlantic lasted from 2002-2014 and funded 41 projects totalling \$16 million in value (MAFMC, 2024) on issues ranging from black sea bass trap design to evaluations of summer flounder size and bag limits (MAFMC, 2021b). The program was discontinued due to concerns of misuse (e.g., misreporting of landings) and concerns that the quality of the science did not justify the costs (Seagraves, 2014). While some projects, such as the trawl survey conducted by the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program, generated data used in management, many other projects failed scientific review post-completion, raising concerns about proposal vetting and project oversight (MAFMC, 2024). Thus, expansion of the RSA program would require reforms that address these issues. Exempted fishing permits are a national program supported by all of the FMCs (NMFS, 1996). These permits allow fishermen who partner with scientists to conduct cooperative research to fish in ways that may not otherwise be permitted. The dedicated allocation of quota to these programs could incentivize research into adaptive actions that promote climate resilience (Bonito et al., 2022). For example, research could reveal methods for targeting emerging fisheries, avoiding

bycatch problems, generating more reliable indices of abundance that support better management, marketing new products, or making gears more efficient (Free, Anderson, et al., 2023).

## 4.7 Reduce impacts of changes to allocation policies on stakeholders

The adjustment of quota allocation policies in response to climate change and other socioecological factors will inevitably result in a set of “winners” who gain quota and “losers” whose quota is taken away. A number of actions can be taken to minimize the socioeconomic impacts to individuals and communities losing access to quota when allocation policies change. First, the gradual “phase in” or “phase out” of changes to allocation policies provides time to adapt. Phased allocation changes have been pioneered by the Mid-Atlantic FMC, which, for example, used a 7-year phase-in period to reallocate commercial bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*, Pomatomidae) quota among fourteen East Coast states (MAFMC, 2021a). Second, the preservation of some minimal amount of quota through a “*de minimis*” allocation guarantees at least some level of access for historical participants when allocations are dynamically updated based on the current abundance or distribution of resources. *De minimis* allocations have been used by the Mid-Atlantic FMC to preserve minimum levels of commercial access to bluefish by states (MAFMC, 2021a) and have been used by the Pacific FMC to preserve minimum levels of access to South of Cape Falcon Coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*, Salmonidae) for the recreational sector when biomass fluctuates (PFMC, 2021). Such policies could preserve access if the adjustment of spatial quota allocations in response to survey-based (e.g., New England TMGC-managed stocks) or model-based (e.g., Mid-Atlantic black sea bass) estimates of spatial distribution became more common. Finally, the redistribution of allocation through the sale of quota rather than through policy adjustments allows those losing quota to be directly compensated, which provides capital necessary for adaptation (Mason et al., 2022).

## 4.8 Conduct regular reviews of allocation policies

Adaptive management requires the periodic review of policies to ensure that objectives are being met or if adjustments are needed. Thus, managers must develop a clear procedure for determining when to review allocation policies, whether to adjust them, and how to make adjustments when necessary. A number of NOAA policy documents provide useful guidance on scheduling and conducting allocation policy reviews (W. Morrison, 2016b, 2017b, 2017c) but implementation of this guidance has lagged (US GAO, 2020). These guidelines suggest that reviews could be scheduled at regular intervals, prompted by stakeholder feedback, or triggered by a tracked performance indicator. Managers could blend approaches to balance the advantages and disadvantages associated with each approach. For example, allocation reviews require time and resources that compete with other FMC responsibilities (PFMC, 2023a), and regular reviews should not be scheduled too frequently. Instead, they could operate as a failsafe in case a review is not triggered by either stakeholder input or a tracked performance indicator within a set timeframe. The ability for stakeholder feedback to prompt allocation reviews strengthens inclusive, participatory, and transparent governance, which are central to climate-resilient fisheries management (Mason et al., 2022); however, to avoid taking on allocation reviews too frequently, clear criteria for stakeholder-prompted reviews must be established. Furthermore, some stakeholder groups may have better representation than others, underscoring the value of regular or indicator-triggered reviews to ensure equity and fairness for underrepresented groups. Triggering reviews based on a tracked

performance indicator is a compelling approach because it forces managers to define clear and measurable management objectives. The indicator could be economic (e.g., cost-benefit, economic impact, or economic efficiency analyses; (Edwards, 1990; Plummer et al., 2012)), social (e.g., metrics of resilience, vulnerability, or well-being; (Jepson & Colburn, 2013)), ecological (e.g., changes in stock status, increases in discards, changes in species distribution, etc.), or a combination, noting that National Standard 5 prevents allocation decisions from being made based on economics alone (§ 600.330 National Standard 5—Efficiency, 1998).

## 5. CANDIDATE FISHERIES FOR ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW

### 5.1 Methods

We identified FMP/FEPs that are vulnerable to climate change, making them strong candidates for policy review and potential reform to integrate best practices for climate-adaptive allocation strategies described in the previous section. To assess vulnerability, we used information from two complementary sources: (1) expert-opinion-based assessments of species-specific climate vulnerability from regional Climate Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs) (W. E. Morrison et al., 2015, 2016; NOAA Fisheries, 2024b) and (2) model-based projections of regional species-specific range shifts under climate change (Morley et al., 2018). While the CVAs provide general insights into the full range of potential climate impacts, the range shift projections provide more detailed insights into the magnitude of future range shifts specifically. The CVAs cover a wider range of species, as the range shift projections were only generated for federally managed species that are well-sampled by regional bottom trawl surveys (Morley et al., 2018).

CVAs leverage expert knowledge to assess the vulnerability of species to climate change based on their exposure to projected changes in the environment (e.g., warming oceans) and their sensitivity to these changes based on their life history characteristics (e.g., reproductive rates, diet, etc.). Ultimately, species are classified as having “very high”, “high”, “moderate”, or “low” exposure, sensitivity, and vulnerability to climate change. We assembled CVA designations for available species in the following regions: Northeast (Hare et al., 2016), South Atlantic (Burton et al., 2023), Gulf of Mexico (Quinlan et al., 2023), Pacific (McClure et al., 2023), North Pacific (Spencer et al., 2019), and Western Pacific (Giddens et al., 2022). There is no CVA for the Caribbean region and the CVA for the Northeast region does not differentiate between stocks managed by the New England and Mid-Atlantic FMCs. Note also that not all federally managed species have a CVA designation. Species managed through allocation that also had high exposure, sensitivity, or vulnerability to climate change were classified as strong candidates for policy review and integration of best practices.

We used species projections from Morley et al. (2018) to identify federal stocks likely to undergo climate-driven range shifts by the end of the century. These projections, based on historical species distributions and general circulation climate models, estimate range shifts of fish and invertebrates effectively sampled by trawl gear under both low and high greenhouse gas emission scenarios (Relative Concentration Pathways 2.6 and 8.5). The range shifts were calculated by measuring the changes in the locations of species’ weighted centroids between the present and 2100 (Morley et al.,



2018). We matched these species projections to federally managed stocks. Since the certainty of the predicted range shifts varied across species, we only matched stocks to region-specific projections for species with medium and high certainty estimates. The matched stocks were then grouped by FMP. Only stocks made up of species explicitly stated in the FMP were included (i.e., the “Shark complex” managed through the Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands FMP was not included). FMPs for which the median range shift fell within the 1st quartile of range shifts across regions were classified as mild, within the 2nd quartile as moderate, within the 3rd quartile as pronounced, and within the 4th quartile as extreme. We classified FMPs with high or extreme median range shifts as strong candidates for review and integration of best practices for climate-adaptive allocation policies. Finally, we identified stocks currently managed through spatial allocation policies (e.g., country, state, region) that are projected to experience high or extreme shifts by the end of the century, as area-based allocation policies are most directly impacted by shifting species distributions (Palacios-Abrantes et al., 2023).

## 5.2 Results

### 5.2.1. Climate vulnerability

Based on the CVA analysis, the North Pacific had the fewest FMPs classified as candidates for allocation policy review, while the South Atlantic had the most FMPs classified as strong candidates for review. FMPs that are classified as strong candidates for policy review use allocation as a management strategy and manage species highly vulnerable to climate change. These FMPs would benefit from integration of best practices for climate-adaptive allocation strategies. We identified the following FMPs as strong candidates for review, sorted by FMC:

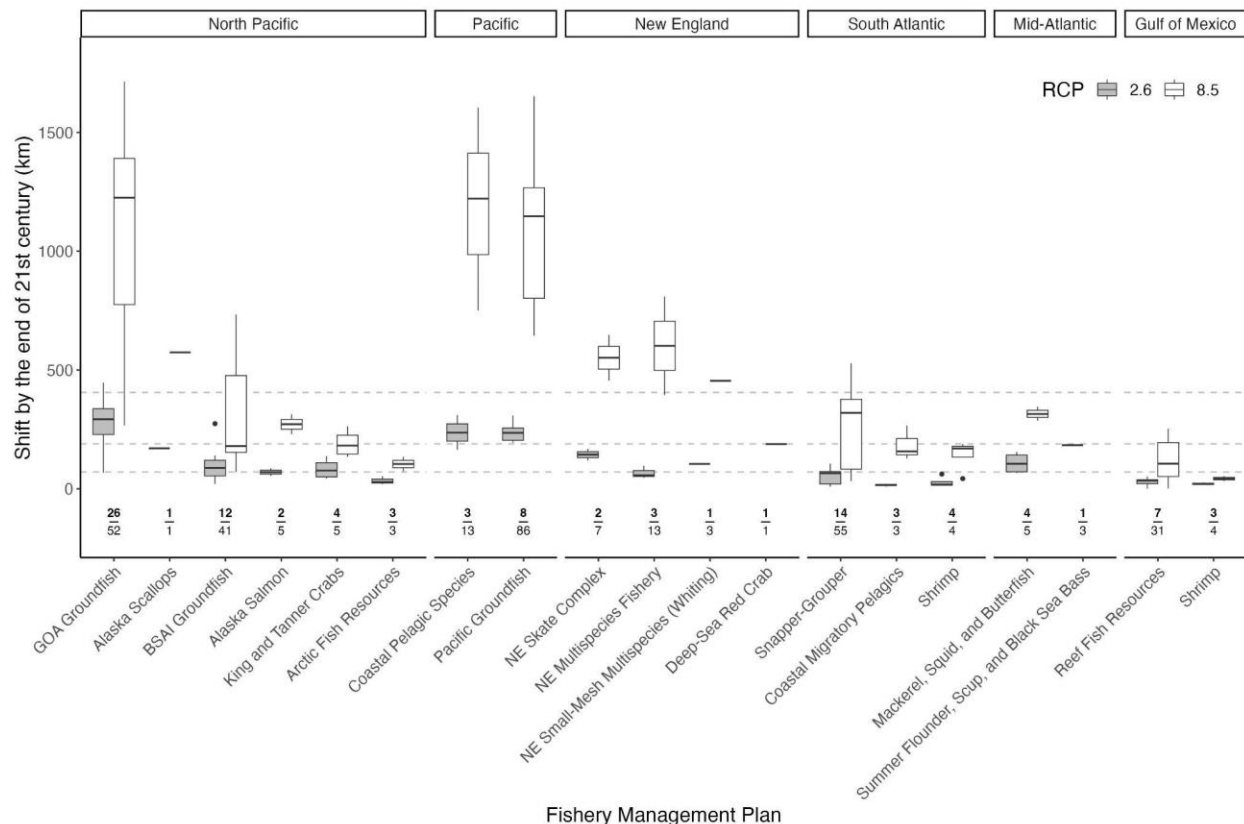
- **New England:** The Atlantic Sea Scallops, Northeast Multispecies Fishery, and Northeast Skate Complex FMPs are strong candidates for policy review in the New England region because many of their stocks exhibit high vulnerability and are managed through allocations. Although the Atlantic Salmon FMP exhibits high climate vulnerability, there are no allocations in this fishery since catch is prohibited. The remaining FMPs all include species with low climate vulnerability.
- **Mid-Atlantic:** The Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass, Ocean Quahog, and Tilefish FMPs are strong candidates for policy review in the Mid-Atlantic region because many stocks are both of high vulnerability and managed through allocations.
- **South Atlantic:** All but one FMP are strong candidates for policy review given the prevalence of allocation policies and the high climate vulnerability of many stocks. The exception is the Dolphin-Wahoo FMP, which exhibits moderate climate vulnerability.
- **Gulf of Mexico:** The Reef Fish Resources FMP is a strong candidate for policy review because of the prevalence of allocations, and the inclusion of highly vulnerable stocks.
- **Pacific:** The Pacific Salmon FMP is the strongest candidate for policy review in the Pacific region, followed by the Pacific Groundfish and Highly Migratory Species FMPs.
- **North Pacific:** The North Pacific exhibits the least climate vulnerability of the evaluated regions but a large number of species managed within its FMPs have not been assessed for their climate vulnerability. However, the primary target species are represented in these assessments. Of its FMPs, the Groundfish and Crab FMPs are the best candidates for policy review.

- **Western Pacific:** Like the North Pacific region, the Western Pacific region also manages a large number of species that have not been assessed for their climate vulnerability. Based on the species that have been assessed, the Pacific Pelagic FEP (which overlaps with the Pacific's Highly Migratory Species FMP and manages both pelagic fisheries in the EEZ and pelagic fisheries that operate on the high seas but are based in the region) employs allocation and exhibits high climate vulnerability, and is therefore a strong candidate for allocation policy reform.

### 5.2.2. Distribution shifts

Medium or high certainty regional projections were available for 102 of the 1031 unique taxa/regions represented by federal stocks managed by the North Pacific, Pacific, New England, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and Gulf of Mexico FMCs. Projections were based on fisheries independent bottom trawl survey data, which are not available in the jurisdictions of the Western Pacific or Caribbean FMCs. Projected range shifts (including both RCP 2.6 and 8.5) ranged from 0 km (wrenchman *Pristipomoides aquilonaris* under RCP 2.6 managed through the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish FMP) to 1714 km (redstripe rockfish *Sebastes proriger* under RCP 8.5 managed through the Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska FMP). Pulling from the distribution of projected range shifts across species and RCPs, we classified average shifts between 0 and 71 km as mild (1st quartile), between 72 and 189 km as moderate (2nd quartile) between 190 and 406 km as pronounced (3rd quartile), and between 407 and 1714 km as extreme (4th quartile). Based on the range shift projection analysis for the subset of species with projections available, strong candidates for policy review and subsequent integration of best practices for climate-adaptive allocation strategies are described below:

- **New England:** The NE Skate Complex, NE Multispecies, and NE Small-Mesh Multispecies FMPs are strong candidates for policy review because they are predicted to experience extreme stock shifts under RCP 8.5.
- **Mid-Atlantic:** The Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP is a strong candidate for policy review because it is expected to experience pronounced stock shifts under RCP 8.5.
- **South Atlantic:** The Snapper-Grouper FMP is a strong candidate for policy review because it is expected to experience pronounced stock shifts under RCP 8.5.
- **Gulf of Mexico:** No FMPs were strong candidates for policy review as all average range shifts were classified as mild or moderate.
- **Pacific:** Both FMPs with stock projections available in the Pacific (Coastal Pelagic Species and Pacific Groundfish) are expected to undergo pronounced range shifts under RCP 2.6 and extreme range shifts under RCP 8.5, and are therefore strong candidates for policy review and potential reform.
- **North Pacific:** The Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), Alaska Scallops, and Alaska Salmon FMPs are all strong candidates for policy review. GOA groundfish stocks are expected to experience a pronounced shift under RCP 2.6 and an extreme shift under RCP 8.5. Scallops are expected to undergo an extreme shift under RCP 8.5. Salmon are expected to undergo a pronounced shift under RCP 8.5.



**FIGURE 14.** The projected range shift of targeted species managed by each Fishery Management Plan (FMP) based on species distribution models by Morley et al. 2018 for low (RCP 2.6, gray) and high (RCP 8.5, white) emissions scenarios. FMPs are grouped by regional Fishery Management Council (FMC). FMC and FMPs decrease in magnitude of shift from left to right. The number of species in the FMP for which region-specific medium or high projections exist is printed above the FMP on the x-axis in bold above the total number of species managed by the FMP. Horizontal dashed lines represent 1st quartile, the median, and the 3rd quartile of projected range shifts across regions. In the boxplots, the solid line indicates the median, the box indicates the interquartile range (IQR; 1st to 3rd quartile), the whiskers indicate 1.5 times the IQR, and points indicate outliers.

Stocks expected to undergo range shifts that are also currently managed through spatial allocation policies are especially strong candidates for policy review to effectively integrate climate-adaptive management practices. The following stocks are managed using spatial allocation and projected to experience pronounced or extreme range shifts:

- **Mid-Atlantic FMC**

- **Atlantic mackerel:** Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) is managed by the Mid-Atlantic FMC through the Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. Within the Northeast US, the species is expected to undergo a pronounced shift of 315 km under RCP 8.5. This will pose a challenge for international allocation policies between the U.S. and Canada.
- **Scup:** Scup (*Stenotomus chrysops*) is managed by the Mid-Atlantic FMC through the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass FMP from the U.S.-Canadian border to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Within the Northeast US, the species is expected



to experience a pronounced range shift of 203 km under RCP 2.6. This shift in resource distribution will pose a challenge for state-based allocations.

- **Pacific FMC**

- **Northern anchovy:** Northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*) is managed by the Pacific FMC through the Coastal Pelagic Species FMP. Along the US East Coast, the species is expected to undergo a pronounced shift of 236 km under RCP 2.6, and an extreme shift of 1221 km under RCP 8.5. This will pose a challenge for international allocation policies between the US and Mexico.
- **Pacific chub mackerel:** Pacific chub mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*) is managed by the Pacific FMC through the Coastal Pelagic Species FMP. Off of the U.S. west coast, the species is expected to undergo a pronounced shift of 310 km under RCP 2.6 and an extreme shift of 1604 km under RCP 8.5. The stock is allocated between the U.S. and Mexico, and therefore range shifts could pose challenges to existing policy.

- **North Pacific FMC**

- **Atka mackerel:** Atka mackerel (*Pleurogrammus monopterygius*) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands is managed by the North Pacific FMC through the Groundfish FMP. Atka mackerel in this region are expected to undergo a pronounced shift of 284 km under RCP 8.5. In an effort to avoid local depletion, the complex is currently allocated among three subregions.
- **Blackspotted and rougheye rockfish complex:** The fishery for blackspotted and rougheye rockfish is managed in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands by the North Pacific FMC through the Groundfish FMP. Within this large region of the northeast Pacific, the blackspotted rockfish (*S. melanostictus*) is expected to undergo an extreme range shift of 448 km, and the rougheye rockfish (*S. aleutianus*) is expected to undergo an extreme range shift of 563 km under RCP 8.5. The complex is currently allocated between 1) the western and central Aleutian Islands, and 2) eastern Aleutian Islands and eastern Bering Sea, and therefore these extreme range shifts warrant policy review.
- **Chinook salmon:** Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) is managed by the North Pacific FMC through the Salmon Fisheries of the EEZ off the Coast of Alaska FMP. Within the Eastern Bering Sea, the species is expected to undergo a pronounced range shift of 229.9 km under RCP 8.5. This will pose a challenge for international allocation policies between the U.S. and Canada.
- **Pacific ocean perch:** The fishery for Pacific ocean perch (*Sebastes alutus*) in the Gulf of Alaska is managed by the North Pacific FMC through the Groundfish FMP. Within this region, the species is expected to undergo a pronounced shift of 203 km under a low emissions scenario, and an extreme shift of 768 km under RCP 8.5. This will pose a challenge for spatial allocations across the Gulf of Alaska. Multiple other rockfish that are spatially allocated in the Gulf of Alaska are also expected to undergo pronounced or extreme range shifts, making the GOA Groundfish FMP an especially strong candidate for allocation policy review and integration of climate-ready practices (i.e., aurora [*S. aurora*], canary [*S. pinniger*], redbanded [*S. babcocki*], redstripe [*S. proriger*], sharpchin [*S. zacentrus*], shortraker [*S. borealis*], shortspine [*S. altivelis*], silvergray [*S. brevispinus*], splitnose [*S. diploia*], yelloweye [*S. ruberrimus*]).

### 5.2.3. Synthesis

Using assessments of climate vulnerability from both regional CVAs and projected distribution shifts under climate change, we identified 17 FMP/FEPs and 11 stocks that are strong candidates for policy review (**Table 2**).

**TABLE 2.** *FMPs and spatially allocated stocks identified as strong candidates for policy review on Climate Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs) and projected distribution shifts. Bolded FMPs indicate agreement between the two analytical approaches. NE=Northeast; GOA=Gulf of Alaska; BSAI=Bering Sea Aleutian Islands.*

Region	Climate vulnerability	Distribution shifts	Spatially allocated stock
New England	<b>NE Multispecies</b> <b>NE Skate Complex</b> Atlantic Sea Scallops	<b>NE Multispecies</b> <b>NE Skate Complex</b> NE Small-Mesh Multispecies	
Mid-Atlantic	Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass	Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish	Atlantic mackerel Scup
South Atlantic	<b>Snapper-Grouper</b>	<b>Snapper-Grouper</b>	
Gulf of Mexico	Reef Fish Resources		
Pacific	<b>Groundfish</b> Pacific Salmon	<b>Groundfish</b> Coastal Pelagic Species	Northern anchovy Pacific chub mackerel
North Pacific	Groundfish ( <b>GOA/BSAI</b> ) Crab	Groundfish ( <b>GOA</b> ) Scallops Salmon	Pacific ocean perch (GOA) Demersal shelf rockfish (GOA) Thornyhead rockfish complex (GOA) Other rockfish complex (GOA) Atka mackerel (BSAI) Blackspotted and rougheye rockfish (BSAI) Chinook salmon (BSAI)
Western Pacific	Pacific Pelagic	<i>Not available</i>	
Caribbean	<i>No CVA available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Quota allocations are a highly versatile fisheries management tool. They can be used to promote fairness and equity, improve economic efficiency, prevent local depletion, avoid catch limit overages, reduce bycatch, and curb the race to fish. However, without adaptive management, climate change threatens the ability for these important policies to achieve their intended objectives by altering the abundance, distribution, and phenology of both target and non-target species. First and foremost, the success of adaptive management depends on clearly defined management objectives so that the performance of management strategies can be regularly evaluated and updated when needed. Given the “fairness and equity” objectives common to most national and international allocation policies, a much needed first step for operationalizing adaptive quota allocation management is clearly defining these lofty but murky concepts. In the absence of clear definitions, the vast majority of quota allocation policies have envisioned “fairness and equity” as the maintenance of historical

access to fishing opportunities. However, the continuation of such an objective under directional climate change is ill-advised if not impossible. This opens the door for envisioning new fairness and equity objectives that could focus on incorporating historically excluded participants, creating opportunities for new entrants, or offsetting negative impacts from climate change, offshore wind development, or other factors inhibiting fisheries, all while protecting opportunities for historical participants and providing time for them to adapt as stocks shift beneath them. Here, through an analysis of “bright spots” of climate-adaptive allocation policies, we provide a roadmap toward helping allocation policies to achieve their fairness and equity goals in a rapidly changing ocean.

## **ADDITIONAL CONTEXT**

This report is being prepared for submission to Fish & Fisheries.

All of the data used in the paper are either available in the supplemental materials or in the following GitHub repository: [https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc\\_allocation](https://github.com/zoekitchel/cc_allocation).

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# SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES AND FIGURES

**TABLE S1.** Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) and Fishery Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) used to manage U.S. federal fish and invertebrate stocks.\*

FMP/FEP	Year	# of species	# of stocks
<i>New England (10 FMPs)</i>			
Atlantic Sea Scallop	1982	1	1
Deep-Sea Red Crab	2002	1	1
Northeast Multispecies	1986	13	20
Small-Mesh Multispecies (Whiting)	2000	3	5
Northeast Skate Complex	2003	7	7
Atlantic Herring	1999	1	1
Atlantic Salmon	1988	1	1
Monkfish (with MAFMC)	1999	1	1
Spiny Dogfish (with MAFMC)	1999	1	1
Atlantic HMS (with all East Coast RFMCs)	2006		
<i>Mid-Atlantic (5 FMPs)</i>			
Atlantic Surfclam & Ocean Quahog	1977	2	2
Bluefish	1990	1	1
Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish	1978	5	5
Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass	1988	3	3
Tilefish	2001	2	2
<i>South Atlantic (6 FMPs)</i>			
Dolphin & Wahoo	2004	4	4
Golden Crab	1996	1	1
Shrimp	1993	4	4
Snapper-Grouper	1983	55	55
Coastal Migratory Pelagics (with GFMC)	1983	3	3
GOM & SA Spiny Lobster (with GFMC)	1982	1	1
<i>Gulf of Mexico (3 FMPs)</i>			
Red Drum	1986	1	1
GOM Reef Fish	1984	31	31
GOM Shrimp	1981	4	4
<i>Caribbean (3 FMPs)</i>			
Puerto Rico	2022	65, plus cucumbers/urchins/corals	37
St. Thomas & St. John	2022	45, plus cucumbers/urchins/corals	26
St. Croix	2022	49, plus cucumbers/urchins/corals	26
<i>Pacific (4 FMPs)</i>			
Coastal Pelagic Species	2000	5	5
Pacific Groundfish	1982	86	100+
Pacific Salmon	2016	3	67
Pacific HMS	2003	11	11
<i>North Pacific (6 FMPs)</i>			
BSAI King & Tanner Crabs	1989	5	10
Arctic Fish	2009	3	3
BSAI Groundfish	1982	17, plus 3 complexes	23
GOA Groundfish	1978	19, plus 5 complexes	28
AK Salmon	1979	5	many
AK Scallop	1995	1	1
<i>Western Pacific (5 FEPs)</i>			
American Samoa Archipelago	2009		
Hawaii Archipelago	2009		
Guam (Mariana Archipelago)	2009		
Pacific Pelagic Fisheries	2009		
Pacific Remote Island Areas	2009		

\* We did not evaluate the following habitat-oriented FMPs because they do not manage fisheries: New England: Habitat; South Atlantic: Coral, Sargassum; Gulf of Mexico: Aquaculture, Coral, Essential Fish Habitat; Pacific: Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

**TABLE S2.** Structure of the quota allocation policy database.

Description	Column name	Example	Status / notes
Council	council	NEFMC	
Management plan	fmp	Northeast Multispecies	
Stock name	stock	Granger fish - Georges Bank	
Species category	spp_catg	Groundfish	
Common name	comm_name	Granger fish	
Scientific name	sci_name	<i>Petrificus totalus</i>	
Catch prohibited (yes/no)?	prohibited_yn	No	
Allocation rule (yes/no)?	allocation_yn	Yes	
Geographic rule (yes/no)?	spatial_yn	Yes	Derive programmatically
Country rule (yes/no)?	country_yn	Yes	Derive programmatically
List of countries	country_list	US, Canada	
Number of countries	country_n	2	Derive programmatically
Country reference years	country_yrs	1985-1990, 1995-2001	
State rule (yes/no)?	state_yn	Yes	
List of states	state_list	ME, NH, RI	
Number of states	state_n	3	
State reference years	state_yrs	1985-1990	
Area (yes/no)?	area_yn	Yes	
List of areas	area_list	Georges Bank, Gulf of Maine	
Number of areas	area_n	2	Derive programmatically
Area reference years	area_yrs	1985-1990, 1995-2001	
Sector rule (yes/no)?	sector_yn	Yes	
List of sectors	sector_list	Research, comm, rec, tribal	
Number of sectors	sector_n	3	
Basis (catch/effort)	sector_basis	Catch	
Sector reference years	sector_yrs	1985-1990	
Subsector rule (yes/no)?	subsector_yn	Yes	
List of subsectors	subsector_list	Longline, gillnet, trap	
Number of subsectors	subsector_n	3	Derive programmatically
Subsector reference years	subsector_yrs	1985-1990, 1995-2001	
Seasonal rule (yes/no)?	season_yn	Yes	
List of seasons	season_list	Jan - May, Jun - Dec	
Number of seasons	season_n	2	Derive programmatically
Indiv/group rule (yes/no)?	indiv_yn	Yes	
Basis (hist., equal, auction)	indiv_basis	Historical catch	
Reference years	indiv_yrs	1985-1990	
Owner	indiv_owner	Vessel	
Share caps (yes/no)?	indiv_caps_yn	Yes	

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## Brandon Hakulin

### Email:

[brandon.hakulin@yahoo.com](mailto:brandon.hakulin@yahoo.com)

### Role(s):

Private recreational angler

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

Good day, I am a Science teacher, veteran, and avid fisherman. I have fished the New England coast for the past 40 years and have seen major changes in numbers and sizes of fish.

I am in favor of developing better data collection methods for the recreational sector, whether that be through apps or better / more survey sampling. But I am not in favor of developing different allocations or management measures for private anglers vs for-hire. The people going out on these trips are recreational anglers. I don't feel that the fact they are paying customers of a for-hire boat should entitle them to take more, or different sized fish than the recreational anglers fishing from private vessels. Just my opinion.

Thanks, Brandon

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

Good day, I am a Science teacher, veteran, and avid fisherman. I have fished the New England coast for the past 40 years and have seen major changes in numbers and sizes of fish.

I am in favor of developing better data collection methods for the recreational sector, whether that be through apps or better / more survey sampling. But I am not in favor of developing different allocations or management measures for private anglers vs for-hire. The people going out on these trips are recreational anglers. I don't feel that the fact they are paying customers of a for-hire boat should entitle them to take more, or different sized fish than the recreational anglers fishing from private vessels. Just my opinion.

Thanks, Brandon

### Comments - Other:

It would be nice if the number of game wardens/conservation officers could be increased as well. There is a decrease in fish, but an increase in anglers, particularly anglers that are new to our country or first and second generation immigrants who may not understand the importance of conservation yet. Thank you for your time and service.

### Date Submitted:

01/31/2025

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## Jeff Duerr

**Email:**

[jduerr@duck.com](mailto:jduerr@duck.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I believe there should be recreational sector separation in terms of reporting. For the for-hire sector, it should be mandatory for licensing; for the private sector, it should be incentivized. I am strongly opposed to any differences in size or catch limits.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

There should be an incentive for reporting. Perhaps each report could be an entry into a monthly or whatever period random drawing for fishing-related items, perhaps donated by a local tackle retailer in exchange for recognition for their participation.

**Date Submitted:**

02/04/2025

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## Arthur James

**Email:**

[amjretired@gmail.com](mailto:amjretired@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I do not believe for hire charters should have any different regs than private recs. PERIOD.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Should continue with the scientific investigations and data collections as is. (in the Artillery we called it a S.W.A.G.)

**Comments - Other:**

regarding summer flounder (fluke): Season mid May through September, 18" to 24" slot size limit and a bag limit of TWO

**Date Submitted:**

02/06/2025

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## Robert Tworkowski

**Email:**

[roberttworkowski@gmail.com](mailto:roberttworkowski@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Other:**

Having fished the Atlantic coastal waters for the past 50 years recreationally and commercially - it is evident that our fish populations are being impacted and reduced by many factors which include habitat decline and over fishing. After witnessing the success of the striped bass moratorium that was put in affect several years back and the rebound in that population - I am in favor of placing a complete moratorium again -(several years to be worked out by the fisheries committees) whereby no harvest or catch or release is allowed until the populations rebound to their former levels. This is particularly true for the striped bass and blue fish populations, So rather than discuss the potential change for the sector separation and/or data collection - in the near term I am for a managed moratorium. I know that this will create some pain in the near term - but it should provide a healthy population once it recovers and is managed properly in the long term. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my concerns. Robert Tworkowski

**Date Submitted:**

02/15/2025

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## Gerard Addonizio

**Email:**

[gaddoniz@med.cornell.edu](mailto:gaddoniz@med.cornell.edu)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I represent many recreational anglers in voicing my objection to your sector separation harvest proposal for private and for-hire sectors. If the goal is conservation, there is no justification for this. This kind of action would represent yet another discriminatory proposal where the individual angler is left in the dust of more powerful lobby groups. We will be watching all of this very closely and will use all political avenues available to us to prevent unfair action by the Commission and Council.

**Date Submitted:**

02/18/2025



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## DOUG KISBY

**Email:**

[dougekisby@yahoo.com](mailto:dougekisby@yahoo.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, General public

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I do not believe we should see a separation on this. The commercial quota is already to high.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

All species, excluding bluefish, should continue to stay a current harvest limits. Bluefish should be at no more than 1 per angler per day as we do not see the numbers and anglers do not look to harvest them. Black seabass should be managed more conservatively, however the fall season should have a smaller length requirement

**Date Submitted:**

02/18/2025

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## ALBERT HESSE

**Email:**

[scubarx1@aol.com](mailto:scubarx1@aol.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, General public

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

recreational sector separation does not make sense if the goal would be to favor for hire / headboat limits and have more restriction on private anglers . Particularly in bag limits and sizes. Recreational catch sizes have been more restrictive than the commercial sizes and limits for years . A better approach would be to look at all sectors and create common limits and in particular sizes. For example commercial fluke size of 14 inches while recreational fluke size is 19.25 . there should be a blend where weather commercial or recreational catch size is say 17 inches. recreational take is not every day and not every registerd vessel is fishing . rarely is a private sector vessel fishing everyday more like weekends considering wheather maybe at most 10 or twelve trips a season. where comercial catches are tons and several days a month.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Data collection needs to be more exact and not extrapolated. Monthly private sector catches mandatory would be a great help in the reality of number of catches made. Registered fishing holders should be surveyed monthly. Currently catches are grossly over valued for the private sector. With current sizes and limits it is rare for most fisherman I know to keep more than 1 or two fish a trip. Yet your current evaluations for every registered boat ore grossly over valued .

**Comments - Other:**

all species needs to be included and the relationship of species as a whole needs to be evaluated. Currently Striped bass being protected has caused a decrease in other species . and the lower counts of winter flounder, lower counts of blue fish , sea bass , snappers , can be attributed to the increase in Striped bas and the presence of large fish would consume the young of all the other species. Separating species for management of the fisherie is a big mistake , all species inhabit same waters and affect each other. Favoring striped bass has made it the dominant species and catches of other species is greatly reduced. A 50 pound striped bass is eating up the stocks of these other species. A balance needs to be established so all species can thrive and be healthy. We used to catch bluefish and snappers abundantly and today you can more easily catch a striper to let go than either of the others.

**Date Submitted:**

02/19/2025

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**Michael Danko****Email:**

[mdanko2392000@yahoo.com](mailto:mdanko2392000@yahoo.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, General public

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

Separating the recreation sector from the for-hire sector will divide the two groups and make the same group of compete for resources amongst themselves. I do not see any good coming from this in terms of resource management and will have social and economic impacts. This will also further compound the distrust in science and fisheries management in general.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

There have been numerous attempts to improve data collection in the past in they have all failed. I see no reason to believe that this time would different. Therefore, I cannot support any funds being directed towards improving data collection.

**Date Submitted:**

02/19/2025

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## Nicholas Fano

### Email:

[fano@fanofirm.com](mailto:fano@fanofirm.com)

### Role(s):

Private recreational angler

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

I wholly disagree with any separation between these sectors. That is, we all pay the same taxes, and have the same rights to our fisheries. My experience has been that for-hire recreational charters are the biggest abusers of exploiting our ocean resources.

I have personally observed, on a 25 foot boat for instance, captain & six anglers, where the captain takes his limit of whatever fish they are targeting, then goes out in the afternoon and, again, takes his limit of fish, all in the hopes of satisfying his customers so they are repeat customers. This is prevalent in this sector.

The equal protection clause of our constitution warrants against this type of proposed separation-plain and simple. Again, we all pay the same taxes, and accordingly have the same rights to our resources.

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

Respectfully, attempted data collection is useless. Again, too many people fudge the numbers, so you will never get an accurate assessment. Unfortunate but true.

### Comments - Other:

Please stop trying to fracture our fishery sectors. Businesses have no greater white than any other recreational angler. In fact, as I previously indicated, the for-hire charters are typically the biggest offenders and abusers of our limited resources.

Charter captains already get, what appears to be, an unlimited number of striped bass bonus tags. I, on the other hand, as a recreational fisher, must reapply to secure a single bonus tag. At the beginning of each season, these recreational Charter guys are given upwards of, from what I understand, 300+ bonus tags. This, in and of itself, is an equal protection violation, and runs contrary to common sense. Why should they be treated greater than any other recreational fisherman?

### Date Submitted:

02/19/2025

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## Paul May

**Email:**

[captpaul468@gmail.com](mailto:captpaul468@gmail.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

none

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, General public

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I believe we should be separate from commercial and for hire!

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Separate data for recreational fishing only

**Comments - Other:**

there are a couple license out there for fluke that allow for hire charters to keep undersize fish at I believe 14". This has been going on for awhile and is absolute bullshit and unfair! serves NO purpose other than tallow a couple charter guys to keep a lot of fish that everyone else must release! > this should be Stopped! One charter guy runs FULL Ahead Charters out of Cape May. also has a sell license so his charter can keep almost everything they boat!

**Date Submitted:**

02/19/2025

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## Stephen Tombs

**Email:**

[shearwaterst@cox.net](mailto:shearwaterst@cox.net)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, Commercial fishery participant (captain, crew, shoreside operations, etc.)

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I feel strongly that charter should not be separated from recreational unless the quota is allocated on the exact same average per boat trip catch of average catch of recreational anglers. Chartering is essentially paying someone to take you recreational fishing and no one has more inherent right to the fish or quota just because they charge someone to go fishing. It's not fair that person 1 can come and catch 6 fluke over 18" because they pay Boat Captain X \$500 when Person 2 can only catch 4 fluke over 19". I have a charter license but I do not feel that the exchange of a few dollars gives me more or special rights to take more fish than the next guy.

**Date Submitted:**

02/19/2025

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## Charles Jewell

**Email:**

[cgjewell14@gmail.com](mailto:cgjewell14@gmail.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

No

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I think this is a terrible idea Reminds me of decide and conquer and further limits the voice of the recreational sector

**Date Submitted:**

02/20/2025

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## Kirk Davis

**Email:**

[kirkjarettedavis@gmail.com](mailto:kirkjarettedavis@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I think that this is fair for some species like scup and sea bass where commercial/for-hire fisheries predominate over private fishermen. I think that it would be inappropriate for fluke which is the bread and butter of the summer fishery for everyone. I don't think permit limits should be kept to those already in the fishery. This would stifle the opportunity of younger people to get into the fishery. I also think that these permits should not be a salable commodity by the current holder.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Data collection seems very poor as the official numbers vary greatly from what I see on the water. I bottom fish from the Gulf of Maine down to the Crystal Coast of North Carolina, so I am not just basing my observations on a small area. Fish like sea bass, scup and red snapper are extremely plentiful. Yet your data always indicates that the harvest cannot be liberalized. Something needs to be done to collect better data. I think an on-line collection system would get more data at a lower price.

**Date Submitted:**

02/20/2025

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## Daniel Giunta

### Email:

[doubledmtk@yahoo.com](mailto:doubledmtk@yahoo.com)

### Role(s):

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, Commercial fishery participant (captain, crew, shoreside operations, etc.)

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

I believe sector separation/mode management options for the for hire fleet should be explored. The goal of most customers aboard a for hire vessel is to retain enough fish for a typical family of 4-6 ppl to enjoy 1-2 meals. This justifies/offsets the fare they pay to board such a vessel. The for hire fleet would greatly benefit from some slightly relaxed fishing regulations in the form of keeper size and/or bag limits. The very small percentage of for hire fleet in comparison to the size of the recreational sector will prove this to be inconsequential in the overall management plan. We saw this already when looking into an increased Striped Bass slot size for the for hire sector. I feel the results for sea bass, scup, fluke and bluefish will mirror this data.

Council will need to consider the possibility that they could see a sharp increase in the number of for hire permit applications if this sector separation or mode management splits occurs. In order to obtain a for hire permit, applicants must show a captains license, enrollment in a drug free consortium and proof of vessel insurance stating the ability to carry passengers for hire. Mandating vessels be documented is also a possibility that can be explored.

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

The recreational sector needs to start submitting catch data. The fact that the overwhelmingly largest user group doesn't have to do this is absolutely ridiculous. Data collection in the form of catch reports can be quickly and easily done through an app on your phone. The for hire fleet has been doing this for many years already and perhaps a less detailed version of that system can be explored.

### Comments - Other:

The for hire industry is the gateway towards private boat ownership. This is where most people get their first taste of our great fishing community and go on in years to come to purchase a boat of their own. If the for hire fleet isn't preserved the size of the recreational fishing community will shrink over time removing a tremendous amount of money from our local economy.

### Date Submitted:

02/26/2025

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## Thomas Cusimano

**Email:**

[seawifeiv@optonline.net](mailto:seawifeiv@optonline.net)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

Montauk Boatman's Captains Association

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I am for a division between recreational and for Hire boats. We do this for a living and take out people who do not have their own boats ... besides we pay a fee for this

**Date Submitted:**

02/26/2025

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## Richard Etzel

**Email:**

[etzbrea@aol.com](mailto:etzbrea@aol.com)

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I am in favor of sector separation. Split the recs and the for hire.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

For hire does EVTR's already. Good luck getting accurate data from the recs.

**Date Submitted:**

02/26/2025

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## Anthony Quaresimo

**Email:**

[anthony\\_quaresimo@yahoo.com](mailto:anthony_quaresimo@yahoo.com)

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, Commercial fishery participant (captain, crew, shoreside operations, etc.)

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

i would be in favor of a mode separation, allocations with the current responsible percentages could be far to fragile to any changes in the future for the for hire sector

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

data collection from private boats has never worked and will never work, as to why i am in favor of the for hire fishing industry to be separate because we are already legally bound to filling out vtr's that could be used

**Comments - Other:**

i dont believe there should be any cap put on the amount of for hire licenses, instead make the license more difficult or inconvenient to obtain, for example proof of charter/party vessel insurance

**Date Submitted:**

02/26/2025

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## Ken Holmes

**Email:**

[brooklyngirl10@optonline.net](mailto:brooklyngirl10@optonline.net)

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I support recreational sector separation in the form of mode separation. We have had mode separation in the past and still do currently in a limited way. I would like to see more widespread mode separation to provide relief to struggling businesses like ours.

We are different than the average recreational fisherman. We are subject to many different laws and regulations, many of which are very expensive. We take on risk and liability and must carry expensive insurance policies. We are professionally trained and licensed mariners. We are subject to random drug tests. We must provide detailed accounting of our fishing efforts and landings every time we leave the dock.

Despite all of this we are treated the same as the guy or gal that takes out their runabout for a



Sunday afternoon on the bay. We get no tax relief for the many gallons of diesel fuel we must purchase. Again we are treated the same. We get nothing. We are regulated to death, inspected, charged, taxed....and we get the same 3 Black Sea Bass at 16.5" minimum size as the weekenders in the runabout.

We desperately need regulations that are acceptable to our customers or we will all go out of business. Many of us believe that is the end game by design which is one of many reasons for the lack of trust with complete sector separation. Many believe this is a divide and conquer set up to finish us off for good. It is sad. We provide a great service to many, many families, children, seniors. Quality of life along the coast involves fishing for many. The majority of whom cannot afford their own boat or wish to leave all the fuss and expense of it to a pro and just enjoy their time on the water.

We don't ask for much. A reasonable and fair season, size and bag limit. One our customers can achieve so they can go home feeling happy about their day. Commercially caught summer flounder are required to be just 14 inches long. It's currently 19.5 inches for us. We are commercial in every way. Something has to give.

I would ask the commission to make every real effort to speed up this process. To help people who work very hard outdoors in all kinds of weather to get by a little easier. To include our voices more in these decisions. I attended the webinar this evening. I have filled out countless comment forms, attended in person, etc. for many years. Nothing ever changes except things get more restrictive, more expensive, more hopeless. Commercial and party/charter fishing on Long Island is a way of life. A tough one but one worth fighting for. I have been working my tail off for over 30 years in this industry that seems designed to end me. Feels like a rigged system. The harder we work the less we get.

Please help. We need it.

Capt. Ken Holmes  
Vessel "Brooklyn Girl"  
Orient Point, NY

#### **Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

My personal feeling is I don't feel it is or should be legal. However I understand the need for real accurate data and how badly we have been hurt over the years by irrational erroneous data. Basically made up numbers. In the end, if we are "recreational" in the commission's eyes and we are required by law to provide detailed accounts of everything that occurs on our vessels every day then everyone in our "recreational" sector should have to play by the same rules. If we are going to be viewed differently, then I'm fine with the private sector not having to endure the daily interrogation that we receive. But what do we get in return for the separate treatment that is the question.

#### **Comments - Other:**

Please help us we desperately need it. Party/charter for hire vessels are commercial in every way you can think of except when it comes to favorable tax treatment and fishing regulations. Once again some of us have hope and are getting a little excited for this new sector separation proposal. I can

only hope it is real, designed to actually help us not retire us, and that it comes very soon. Not in 2-3 years.

Thank you for reading my comments

**Date Submitted:**

02/26/2025

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## Ken Hejducek

**Email:**

[kenhejducek@gmail.com](mailto:kenhejducek@gmail.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

Mcba

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew, Commercial fishery participant (captain, crew, shoreside operations, etc.)

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I feel the correct course of action now is Mode Mgmt  
Sector sep is very broad at this time. And getting everyone to agree is going to be a major hurdle that I don't feel can be accomplished in a short time frame .

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Rec data collection is virtually non existent from boat and shore enthusiasts. The only real data in the recreational sector is our charter party VTRs. Which is highly functional and yet is the most minute part of the recreational sector . Until we figure this out we are just spinning our wheels .

**Comments - Other:**

Mode mgmt seems to be a good starting point In  
My opinion. We need to have some sort of deviation in the recreational sector. Since we are a a minute percentage of the whole recreational sector . And this will be a fair alternative to achieve the goals needed in the charter party business.

**Date Submitted:**

02/27/2025

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## William Neff

**Email:**

[tbneff@charter.net](mailto:tbneff@charter.net)

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

I believe it's extremely important to collect actual catch data from recreational anglers! Whether they're charter boats, party boats or individual private anglers an easy to use app would be valuable tool to enable this process.

Thanks!

**Date Submitted:**

03/01/2025

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## Timothy Andresen

**Email:**

[andresen13@gmail.com](mailto:andresen13@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

My name is Timothy Andresen and I am a Mate on TheCaptree Princess. I am in favor of sector separation for the party/charter industry. I am in favor of separate measures for each sector (separate regulations for party/charter boats & private anglers) within the same recreational. I am in favor of limiting entry into the for-hire industry by capping permits on uninspected vessels. This will limit speculation of private boats getting permits so they can fish in both sets of regs.

**Date Submitted:**

03/09/2025

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## Cole Danko

**Email:**

[coletule10@gmail.com](mailto:coletule10@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler, General public

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I am opposed to recreational sector separation. This will further divide the sector and result in the same anglers competing amongst themselves. The regulations should be the same for recreational anglers regardless of what type of vessel they fish on. This will also further restrict shore based anglers that will be faced with a smaller quota and tighter size limits.

Overall, less regulations are needed. You are regulating people away from the activity.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

There have been several attempts to improve data collection over the years with no improvement. I see no reason to believe you will be successful this time. Therefore, I do not support any effort or funding for additional data collection efforts.

**Date Submitted:**

03/11/2025

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## Craig Bishop

**Email:**

[cbishop@att.net](mailto:cbishop@att.net)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I strongly urge the recreational sector separation not occur.

Private recreational fisherman who fish from their own boat, spend a small fortune, and contribute a lot to the economy. With the current regulations, it has become almost not worth the cost to go out, only to be able to keep 4 Sea Bass for a meal. Further limiting the private recreational catch of Sea Bass, Fluke and Bluefish would be a mistake.

Private recreational fishing is something we do with family and with our children and grandchildren. Continued changes which transfer allocations from the private recreational fisherman to other sectors will ultimately drive families away from fishing, and harm what should be a wonderful family activity. This is not what anyone should want.

Thank you for listening.

**Date Submitted:**

03/11/2025

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## Thomas Fuda

### Email:

[tom.fuda@gmail.com](mailto:tom.fuda@gmail.com)

### Role(s):

Private recreational angler, General public, Other

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

I am opposed to the establishment of separate management measures for anglers on for-hire vessels. The anglers on for-hire boats are recreational fishermen, and should be subject to the same size and bag limits as private recreational anglers. Any management measures that grant higher bag limits or more liberal size limits to anglers on for-hire vessels is essentially allowing those anglers to purchase the rights to kill more fish than the rest of the recreational sector.

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

I am in favor of the citizen science approach to improving our knowledge of fisheries. As the developer of a mobile fishing app (GotOne!) that has been used in several citizen science projects, I have seen their effectiveness first hand. There are ways to incentivize anglers to participate in such programs (raffles and giveaways for anglers that report fish). However, I think mandatory reporting by private anglers would be burdensome, both on anglers and fishery managers.

I also am in favor of the idea of requiring tournaments to report their catch data to fishery managers (both catch and kill, and catch and release tournaments). Catch and release tournaments can provide valuable catch at length data that is otherwise unavailable for catch and kill tournaments due to size requirements for retention.

### Date Submitted:

03/12/2025

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## Robert Rush

**Email:**

[starfishboats@gmail.com](mailto:starfishboats@gmail.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

United Boatmen of NJ

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

We adamantly opposed to any sector separation for several reasons.

Divides the recreational quota up too much and will not be beneficial to all user groups.

This method divides the fishing community can lead to confrontations in industry

This method may create too many days tied to the dock do to days offered to for hire industry

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Need to start using vtrs from the for hire sector in management process.

**Date Submitted:**

03/14/2025

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## Don Pirro

**Email:**

[dpirro1@gmail.com](mailto:dpirro1@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I support sector separation only for fluke and sea bass as the for hire captains are taking a beating. There is no way the size limit should be 17.5" for fluke for the for hire fishing sector. It should be reduced to 16.5" as it is near impossible to get one keeper fluke at the current limits (10:1 Ratio of shorts to keepers based on my experience in MD/DE). I fished much less on MD/DE head boats in 2024 because of the ridiculous minimum fluke size limits.

Again it is ridiculously hard to even catch half a limit of 13" Sea bass. The for hire fishing sector should have a 12.5" limit which is consistent with NJ. I fished on headboats for seabass in NJ in 2024 because of this ridiculous extra 0.5"

**Comments - Other:**

Don't support sector separation for striped bass as they are in bad shape. I fished the Chesapeake bay alot and last year was the worst striped bass season in more than a decade. They were no where to be seen in any concentration even in the best months of Nov/Dec.

**Date Submitted:**

03/16/2025

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## Anthony DiLernia

### Email:

[tdilernia2@gmail.com](mailto:tdilernia2@gmail.com)

### Role(s):

Private recreational angler, For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

Council is currently using Sector Separation in the Recreational Industry, i.e Bluefish, 3/individual for private vessel, 5/individual on For-Hire Vessels, Blue line Tile Fish, , 3/individual for private vessel, 5/individual on un-inspected For-Hire Vessels, 7/individual on inspected ForHire Vessels

Some states have different size limits and possession limits between shore side anglers and boat anglers, i.e. Scup, NYS and CT

The start of a recreational season for structure dependent species, such as Scup, Black sea bass, or summer flounder, MUST BE THE SAME for both private vessels as well as For-Hire Vessels. Otherwise if one sector started before the other sector the early starting sector would have the ability to remove all of the legal size fish from a structure i.e. artificial reef before the other sector had access to the fish.

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

The current data collection system is inadequate to build a limited access program with quota allocation to the different sectors

### Date Submitted:

03/17/2025

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## Edward Yates

**Email:**

[hunter.fishing@hotmail.com](mailto:hunter.fishing@hotmail.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

Not at this particular time

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I would like to start by saying, I am not in favor of sector, separation the way it is presented at the moment. I would like to see the separation of vessels that are required to report by VTR on a daily basis. Be able to fish for species within The same wave as recreational fisherman. I am going to give you a for instance our season starts May 15 through June 19 in New Jersey that is wave three the recreational Boats can fish at that time. I feel that the higher vessels should be able to pick the days in that wave with the same amount no more days at no size differences no bag limit changes we should be able to start May 1 through June 30 wave report daily that we are targeting black Seabass, which that is our restrictive season take what days that are in that wave and spread them out through the full 60 day wave that would be my recommendation as far as sector separation goes sort of like the RSA program at one time that was in the for higher sector

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

I'd like to comment on this also everybody knows that the data is not correct the data that you would get from the higher sector is hard-core data. We are only a small group of people in today's fishing industry that This data should be used. I know it, and you know it that it is not used to its fullest extent I don't think the higher sector is looking for anything special the little bit of the recreational fishery that we count for I don't feel would be helpful if we were in separate categories, unless we were allowed to use the days as we wish.

**Comments - Other:**

After 45 years in the party, Charter Boat industry in my town of Barn at light there was hardly anyone left that Fish is on a full-time basis. The reason being there's not enough days or crumbs as I call it to recover your investment if you were a young individual starting, we are down to one open party boat and a handful of Charter Boat in my port that are full-time. Thank you for taking the time to go over this. Hopefully, we can come up with some type of ideas that will help everyone in our industry last but not least with the Seabass fishery being rebuilt 2 1/2 times over One of you folks going to open up and release some more of these fish to our industry. thank you for your time

**Date Submitted:**

03/17/2025



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## Matthew King

### Email:

[hulacharters@msn.com](mailto:hulacharters@msn.com)

### Organization/Affiliation:

Hula charters

### Role(s):

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

### Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:

I have read the Rhode Island Charter and Party Boat association's letter of recommendations on these matters and find it In alignment with my views on these matters. While I might have some minor differences of opinion they are what I said minor and believe it's important to speak with a united voice on these matters due to some of the other views on actions in these matters. I support their recommendations as a whole and believe it's a common sense approach to this and not a knee jerk reaction as one side proposes. I believe that both sides of the argument care deeply about the fishery and would be better served to work together and meet in the middle of this. Both sides bare responsibility in this to perhaps sacrifice a little: the for hire industry has been on the sacrificial side through out this and like I stated before let's try to work together with the recreation side to implement common sense action so we all can enjoy this fishery together and insure future generations can do the same.

### Comments - Recreational Data Collection:

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### Comments - Other:

I have read the Rhode Island Charter and Party Boat association's letter of recommendations on these matters and find it In alignment with my views on these matters. While I might have some minor differences of opinion they are what I said minor and believe it's important to speak with a united voice on these matters due to some of the other views on actions in these matters. I support their recommendations as a whole and believe it's a common sense approach to this and not a knee jerk reaction as one side proposes. I believe that both sides of the argument care deeply about the fishery and would be better served to work together and meet in the middle of this. Both sides bare responsibility in this to perhaps sacrifice a little: the for hire industry has been on the sacrificial side

through out this and like I stated before let's try to work together with the recreation side to implement common sense action so we all can enjoy this fishery together and insure future generations can do the same.

**Date Submitted:**

03/20/2025

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**Pete Lee****Email:**

[petelee@shallotteinlet.com](mailto:petelee@shallotteinlet.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

North Carolina has a marine fisheries and state wildlife. The marine fisheries has become a very corrupt organization. They have started damaging our states tourism. I personally know several fishermen that have purchased license in neighboring states and will not come back to North Carolina until this is corrected. I feel this is an extremely poor idea. It allows lobbyist and politicians to support horrible ideology that is not designed to help our Fishery. Let me add that I am a North Carolina native and 69 years old. I have an extreme love of our state and coastal region. But it is really sad that a marine fisheries body will not allow the 10 year old to keep his first catch. It is extremely sad that families come from one side of our state to our Coastal area and spend 5 to \$10,000 to stay a week on one of our beautiful beaches. They wish to go fishing and they catch a classic doormat flounder in our Waters and are not allowed to enjoy it for a family dinner. We have seen corruption in the commercial sector. We have seen in fighting between the two governing bodies and the Marine fishery just wishes to flex its muscle. We have seen fighting and meetings between lobbyists and recreational fishermen because of this sorry and horrible ideology. Sincerely

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

Recreational data collection is for the sole purpose of trying to back up the numbers that we have been falsely giving by our marine fisheries. This is not been done in my 69 years of being on Earth. Just another way of poor control by political controlled body.

**Date Submitted:**

03/20/2025

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## Will Brown

**Email:**

[brownwh2010@gmail.com](mailto:brownwh2010@gmail.com)

**Role(s):**

Private recreational angler

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

I have personally had many fishing days that ended in the dreaded "skunking." Recreational, weekend fisherman, on their own boat, are the least efficient fishermen on the water, while also being the largest user group. For hire boats have an extensive network of peers, are on the water everyday, and have top of the line gear and technology funded by their fishing business. Also, private fishermen contribute the most of all groups to their local communities in terms of dollars spent, taxes, and user fees. Private recreational anglers should get the largest portion of allocation. We contribute more money per fish caught and have the least effective techniques for catching them.

**Comments - Recreational Data Collection:**

In the past 10 years of fishing 20-40 days a year, I have only been surveyed a handful of times. I'm not sure where managers get their data from, but it is not from regular recreational fishermen. We will self report if the allocation is fair.

**Comments - Other:**

We need more than 4 days of American Red Snapper season. They are everywhere. Private recreational anglers should get the largest portion of allocation of all species. We contribute more money per fish caught and have the least effective techniques for catching them.

**Date Submitted:**

03/20/2025

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## TJ Karbowski

**Email:**

[tedkarbowski@yahoo.com](mailto:tedkarbowski@yahoo.com)

**Organization/Affiliation:**

Rock & Roll Charters

**Role(s):**

For hire (party/charter) captain or crew

**Comments - Recreational Sector Separation:**

The For Hire sector requires immediate Mode Management. The current recreational fishing regulations are destroying our businesses. Given the known failure of New MRIP, allocating an independent quota to the For Hire sector poses too much of a risk of causing mid-season species shutdowns. Owning a seasonal businesses is difficult as it is, the recent regulations have made it a

nightmare. Mode management needs to be implemented right now. There is absolutely no reason why it can't be. They forced a striped bass emergency action down our throat in what seemed like 5 minutes. They found the time for that.

In recent years there has been more effort by fisheries managers sending emails with the proper pronouns than actually doing their jobs. It seems now there is mostly all young kids in charge, most of whom are so young they probably still live with their parents. The system is broken. These are environmental activists posing as fisheries managers. The consequences of their decisions affect the entire East Coast economy and they are toying with people's livelihoods. I'm hoping for a whistleblower. Soon.

Meeting after meeting, zoom after zoom, letter after letter. Nothing changes except more cuts that keep making things worse. Sea Bass have been over 200% for 10 years and we keep getting cut. Menhaden are the most important fish on the East Coast and the ASMFC allows Omega Protein to rape and pillage the Bay every year without consequence. Nothing changes. Striped Bass cut to a 3" slot, but in the meantime anyone with a library card and a canoe can get a 15 fish per-day commercial striped bass license in Massachusetts. Windmills popping up all over the Cod spawning grounds while Cod fishing is closed to rebuild the population. Dead whales all over the beaches. Hippocrates, nothing but hippocrates.

If fisheries managers want show even a little tiny bit of credibility in the system, they will hold emergency meetings and make this happen RIGHT NOW.

**Date Submitted:**

03/20/2025