



## **Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment Fishery Management Team/Plan Development Team Meeting March 31, 2025**

The Fishery Management Team/Plan Development Team (FMAT/PDT) met to review scoping comments received and discuss next steps for the Recreational Sector Separation and Data Collection Amendment for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish.

**FMAT/PDT attendees:** Kiley Dancy, Hannah Hart, Tracey Bauer, Chelsea Tuohy, Laura Deighan, Marianne Randall, Sara Turner, Scott Steinback, John Maniscalco, Corrin Flora, Matt Ayer, John Lake, Craig Weedon

**Other attendees:** Chris Batsavage, Adam Nowalsky, Savannah Lewis, Brendan Runde, Travis Ford, Mike Waine, Matt Rigdon, Greg DiDomenico, Elise Koob, Kate Wilke, Nichola Meserve, Alan Bianchi

### **FMAT/PDT Discussion**

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#### ***Scope of Action and Timeline/Complexity of Issues***

##### **Issue 1: Sector Separation**

- The FMAT/PDT acknowledged the scoping comments were split regarding whether to pursue sector separation, and was generally supportive of continuing to explore this issue.
- Because the FMAT/PDT has not begun looking into which data will be used to look at sector separation, and how, it is difficult to comment on specific approaches for sector separation at this time.
- The FMAT/PDT discussed the revised catch estimates from MRIP expected in the next couple of years, reiterating the awkward timing relative to this amendment. Recommendations can be developed using current MRIP data, with an understanding that they may be revised later if needed. However, the group acknowledged that if drastic changes occur, it will be difficult to evaluate and communicate the expected impacts of any changes considered.

##### **Issue 2: Data Collection and Use**

- Some members of the FMAT/PDT believed that the issue of **private angler reporting** may be best considered separately from this action.
  - This issue seems distinct from the other interrelated issues.
  - The group generally agreed that consideration of **mandatory** private angler reporting in particular is likely to greatly increase the complexity and expand the timeline associated with this amendment. Some FMAT/PDT members thought

this approach should be removed from the amendment at this time and possibly explored separately if desired.

- One FMAT/PDT member suggested that **alternative harvest programs** (e.g., tag programs) could also be removed as there are serious doubts about whether this is feasible for these fisheries. Another suggested that the group should learn more about the details of the examples suggested in scoping comments (e.g., striped bass, bluefin tuna).
- The FMAT/PDT will need to better understand state licensing and reporting requirements before getting too far into development of data collection and reporting options.
- Enhanced VTR requirements should be looked at through the lens of enhanced consistency across states and state/federal requirements, which may be more beneficial than just looking at additional data collection.

### **Potential Consideration of For-Hire Permit Criteria**

- The group generally agreed that for-hire permit criteria warrant further exploration, especially in relation to state and federal consistency.
- There is some support for considering whether permit criteria should be differentiated between U.S. Coast Guard uninspected vessels (i.e., six-pack charter vessels) and inspected vessels (larger party boats).
- There is a need to better understand the landscape of for-hire permit use and requirements at the state level, in order for the group to comment on whether state-level permitting requirements should be included in draft options, or only for federal for-hire permits.

### **Timeline and Complexity of the Action**

- In general, it is difficult to comment on the potential complexity of the amendment and whether the timeline is appropriate given the number of different directions that these issues could take.
- Some of the data collection and reporting approaches could delay the action significantly depending on the direction they take, particularly without a more clear definition of the problems to be solved.
- There was general agreement among FMAT/PDT members that if full limited access or permit capping is pursued, it will likely extend the timeline due to controversy and regulatory complexity.
- The group discussed preliminary guidance on which issues require an amendment, and which issues may be able to be implemented by a framework/addenda or other mechanisms if the scope of the action is modified. It is difficult to provide guidance at this early stage. The FMAT/PDT can provide more information after the scope is determined, but provided the following initial thoughts:
  - Major structural changes (e.g., sector separation with separate limits; limited entry) or introduction of new concepts would require an amendment.

- Minor modifications (e.g., adjustments to reporting requirements) could potentially be handled via a framework or addendum.
- There is some concern with addressing issues via something like a technical guidance document, given that it would not have the same impact as an FMP action and could create a complex landscape of different approaches.
- An amendment comes with certain requirements but does not necessarily need to be a complex, drawn out process.

### ***Discussion on Future Analysis Needs***

- The FMAT/PDT reviewed a draft list of potential information to be compiled and preliminary analysis to conduct and generally agreed with the list, depending on the scope of the action.
- It was confirmed that the Recreation Demand Model (RDM) used for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass can generate sector-specific catch estimates. This model is not available for bluefish and there are no current plans to expand it to bluefish.
- The group supported looking at comparisons of VTR for-hire landings vs. MRIP estimated landings, at a coastwide level and by state for states with VTR reporting requirements.
- Need a better understanding of state regulatory barriers or requirements to enact additional permitting or reporting requirements. Some states have statutory limitations on the ability to implement these.
- The group should look into questions raised during the public scoping hearings about the National Saltwater Angler Registry and the universe of anglers in order to better understand concerns raised by scoping commenters.

### **Public Comment**

- Kate Wilke (TNC) asked whether there were certain factors driving the planned timeline, and commented in support of a thoughtful and comprehensive approach rather than rushing the process.
- Greg DiDomenico (Lund's) asked if the FMAT/PDT could discuss potential support for reinstituting mandatory did-not-fish reports for the for-hire fleet. He also would like to see a thorough analysis of the permit universe for these fisheries, including reviewing all of the permits that a vessel owner or a person has, to examine crossover of participation in various commercial and recreational fisheries. There is concern that some people have permits that they may not need or may be misusing. He also requested an exploration of tournament reporting requirements for these species, noting that there is probably a wealth of information there.