



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901
Phone: 302-674-2331 | FAX: 302-674-5399 | www.mafmc.org
Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 27, 2023
To: Council and Policy Board
From: Julia Beaty, Council Staff
Subject: Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda 2.0

On Wednesday, August 9, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Program Policy Board (Policy Board) will review progress and discuss next steps for the Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda 2.0. During this meeting, the Council and Policy Board will: 1) review summaries of two recent Fishery Management Action Team/Plan Development Team (FMAT/PDT) meetings, 2) consider changing the name of this action to the Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda, as recommended by the FMAT/PDT, 3) discuss the role of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, 4) consider use of the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) model in development of this action,¹ 5) discuss the role of the new Council and Commissioner work group and appoint Council members to this group.

The following documents are provided for the Council and Policy Board's consideration of this topic.

- 1) Action Plan
- 2) Summary of June 12, 2023 FMAT/PDT meeting
- 3) Summary of July 11, 2023 FMAT/PDT meeting

¹ Additional information on the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation can be found on the June 2022 Council meeting page (<https://www.mafmc.org/briefing/june-2022>).



Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Harvest Control Rule 2.0 Framework/Addenda

Draft Action Plan

5/24/2023

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

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

Alternatives to be Considered: In June 2022, the Council and Policy Board passed the following motion when taking final action on the Recreational Harvest Control Rule Framework/Addenda: “Move to further develop Alt. B (Pct Change Approach), Alt. D (Biological Reference Point Approach) and Alt. E (Biomass Based Matrix Approach) for implementation no later than the beginning of the 2026 fishing year. Further development should consider, at minimum, F-based approaches for Alt. B and development of measures using modeling or other approaches for Alts. D and E. Further evaluate the issue of “borrowing” as raised by the SSC for alt B, D, and E.”¹ These alternatives are briefly described below and are described in detail in the [reference guide](#) and [final framework document](#) for the previous action. The Council and Policy Board may also identify other alternatives to address the objectives of the action.

- **Percent Change Approach** – This approach was implemented starting with the 2023 recreational management measures for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass. It will also be used for bluefish once that stock is no longer under a rebuilding plan. Under the Percent Change Approach, a determination is made to either liberalize, restrict, or leave measures unchanged based on two factors: 1) Comparison of a confidence interval around an estimate of expected harvest under status quo measures to the average recreational harvest limit (RHL) for the upcoming two years and 2) Biomass compared to the target level, as defined by the most recent stock assessment. These two factors are used to define a target harvest level for setting management measures. The target is defined as a percentage difference from expected harvest under status quo measures.
- **Biological Reference Point Approach and Biological Based Matrix Approach** - These alternatives use a combination of indicators to place the stock in one of multiple potential management measure “bins.” The indicators vary by alternative and include expected harvest under status quo measures, biomass compared to the target level, fishing mortality, recruitment, and/or trends in biomass. Bins associated with poor indicators would have more restrictive management measures and bins with positive indicators would have more liberal measures.

¹ The report from the SSC review is available at <https://www.mafmc.org/ssc-meetings/2022/may10-11>.

Measures would be assigned to all bins the first time the approach is used through the specifications process.

- **Target metric for setting measures** – The previous framework/addenda considered if recreational measures in state and federal waters should collectively aim to achieve a target level of harvest (e.g., based on the RHL), recreational dead catch (e.g., based on the recreational annual catch limit), or fishing mortality.
- **Other alternatives** – This new management action may consider other alternatives, as appropriate. For example, this could include potential revisions to the accountability measures, considerations related to conservation equivalency, and other topics.

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

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

Name	Agency	Role/Expertise
Tracey Bauer	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Julia Beaty	Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Chelsea Tuohy	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	FMAT/PDT Co-Chair
Mike Celestino	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection	Technical analysis and state management
Alexa Galvan	Virginia Marine Resources Commission	Technical analysis and state management
Mark Grant	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Fisheries policy and legal requirements
Marianne Randall	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	National Environmental Policy Act requirements
Scott Steinback	NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center	Recreational fisheries economist
Rachel Sysak	New York Department of Environmental Conservation	Technical analysis and state management
Corinne Truesdale	Rhode Island Department of Fish and Wildlife	Technical analysis and state management
Sam Truesdell	Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries	Technical analysis and state management
Sara Turner	NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office	Scientific and technical analysis of federal fisheries management

Commissioner/Council Member Work Group

During their meeting on May 3, 2023, the Policy Board established a small group of Commissioners to act as a liaison between the PDT/FMAT and the Policy Board. The purpose of this group is to provide clarification of Policy Board direction and/or feedback to the PDT/FMAT. This group will periodically meet with the PDT/FMAT. Appointed Commissioners are listed below. The Council will discuss appointing Council members during their August 2023 meeting.

Name	Council Member or Commissioner
Jason McNamee	Commissioner
Nichola Meserve	Commissioner
Adam Nowalsky	Both
TBD	Council member
TBD	Council member

Draft Timeline – *Subject to change*

May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT)/Plan Development Team (PDT) formed. • May 11 Monitoring Committee (MC)/Technical Committee (TC) meeting to discuss process used to set 2023 measures and potential future improvements.
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMAT/PDT meeting(s) to review previously considered alternatives, lessons learned from first application of Percent Change Approach and use of Recreational Demand Model for setting 2023 measures, and initial discussions of path forward, including potential role of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). • August 8, 9, or 10 Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps, including membership and role of Council/Commissioner work group and potential role for the SSC.
Fall 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMAT/PDT and Council/Commissioner work group meetings to continue development of alternatives. • AP meeting to review progress and provide input (potentially combined with AP meeting for 2024 recreational measures).
December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and Policy Board meeting to review progress and discuss next steps
Early 2024 - Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMAT/PDT and Council/Commissioner work group meetings to continue development of alternatives and develop draft document for public hearings.
August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and Policy Board meeting to approve final range of alternatives and approve draft document for public hearings through Commission process
Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hearings
Late 2024/Early 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FMAT/PDT and AP meetings to provide input to Council and Policy Board prior to final action.

April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and Policy Board meeting for final action.
Spring-December 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development, review, and revisions of framework/addenda documents. • Federal rulemaking. • MC/TC use new process to set 2026 recreational measures.
Late 2025 or early 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective date of implemented changes.



**Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish
Harvest Control Rule 2.0 Framework/Addenda
Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT)/Plan Development Team (PDT)
Meeting #1 Summary
June 12, 2023**

FMAT/PDT Attendees: Tracey Bauer (ASMFC), Julia Beaty (MAFMC), Chelsea Tuohy (ASMFC), Mike Celestino (NJ DEP), Alexa Galvan (VMRC), Mark Grant (GARFO), Marianne Randall (GARFO), Scott Steinback (NEFSC), Rachel Sysak (NY DEC), Corinne Truesdale (RI DEM), Sam Truesdell (MA DMF), Sara Turner (GARFO)

Other Attendees: Alan Bianchi (NC DMF), Kiley Dancy (MAFMC), Greg DiDomenico (Lund's Fisheries/Council AP member), Hannah Hart (MAFMC), Raymond Kane (Commissioner), Adam Nowalsky (Commissioner and Council member), Will Poston (American Saltwater Guides Association)

Overview

The FMAT/PDT met via webinar on Monday, June 12, 2023 to review previously considered management alternatives and items for further consideration during development of this new management action. In addition, the FMAT/PDT discussed next steps, potential analysis needs, possible roles for the Scientific and Statistic Committee (SSC), and a new name for the management action.

Briefing materials considered by the FMAT/PDT are available at: <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/june-12/sfsbsbb-hcrule2-fmat-pdt>

General Discussion

This was the first meeting of this FMAT/PDT, and thus began by providing general introductory information and background. Staff reviewed the role of the FMAT/PDT, the Commissioner/Council member work group, and the goals and objectives of the previous Harvest Control Rule (HCR) Framework/Addenda. In addition, staff provided an overview of alternatives from the previous framework/addenda and additional items the FMAT/PDT has been tasked with considering when developing this new management action, as specified in the motion by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) Policy Board at their June 2022 meeting. Lastly, staff provided a brief overview of next steps, highlighting a Council/Policy Board meeting in August 2023 when they will discuss the goals, scope, and next steps for this management action. Before moving to the discussion topics, the FMAT/PDT asked several questions on the information that was presented.

- One FMAT/PDT member asked if everything considered by the Council/Policy Board in the previous HCR Framework/Addenda is on the table again to be reconsidered for this new management action.
 - The group discussed that the scope of this new management action is not entirely clear yet, as additional guidance from the Council/Policy Board is still needed. For example, some sub-alternatives previously considered may be worth removing because the

reasons they were not selected during final action on the HCR Framework/Addenda are likely still valid (e.g., the non-preferred Percent Change Approach sub-alternatives). The FMAT/PDT can provide advice on the scope of this management action for the Council/Policy Board to consider in August. The FMAT/PDT can also consult with the Commissioner/Council member workgroup later during the development process if there are questions related to the scope.

- An FMAT/PDT member asked why the Percent Change Approach was selected as the preferred alternative when final action was taken on the HCR Framework/Addenda.
 - The Council/Policy Board thought the other alternatives in the framework/addenda required further development before they were ready to be adopted. The binned approaches (i.e., Alternatives D and E) did not have any example measures, which created uncertainty for the Council/Policy Board and the public as to what implementing these other alternatives would look like. The Percent Change Approach is easily understood and was chosen to be implemented while the other alternatives could be further developed.
- An FMAT/PDT member asked for more information about the role of the new Commissioner/Council member workgroup and if it was intended that this group will represent the view of the entire Council/Policy Board.
 - The exact role of the new Commissioner/Council member workgroup and how it will interact with the FMAT/PDT will not be formalized until after the August Council/Policy Board meeting. However, its overall purpose is to make the management action development process smoother so the group does not have to wait for Council/Policy Board meetings to check-in. It will allow the group to get more feedback along the way as alternatives are developed.
- An FMAT/PDT member asked if it is the role of the Council/Policy Board or the FMAT/PDT to define the statement of the problem for this management action. They noted that the statement of the problem might be better determined by managers as a policy decision, rather than from the technical perspective of the FMAT/PDT.
 - The statement of the problem will need the approval of the Council/Policy Board. However, the FMAT/PDT can provide recommendations. The statement of the problem for the previous HCR Framework/Addenda originated from the larger conversations about the recreational reform initiative.

Role of the SSC

Late into the development of the previous HCR Framework/Addenda, the Council's SSC was directed by the Council to provide a qualitative evaluation regarding the potential effect of the alternatives on the SSC's assessment and application of risk and uncertainty in determining ABCs. An SSC sub-committee was formed and a report that represented the consensus view of the SSC was produced in time for final action. The SSC is not usually involved in the development of management actions, but the public, Policy Board, and Council may be interested in their involvement with this new management action given the precedent set by the last action. Staff asked the FMAT/PDT for their input on if the Council were to involve the SSC, what the SSC's role could be and where in the draft timeline would make the most sense for them to be involved.

An FMAT/PDT member noted that the SSC appeared unfamiliar with the FMAT process and their conclusions on the draft HCR Framework/Addenda did not take some key information into account, such as the Recreational Demand Model (RDM). This was likely because the SSC was involved so late in the development of the framework/addenda. However, the SSC was able to provide some useful input, such as the pros and cons to the binned approaches and concerns about the metrics being used. The FMAT/PDT agreed that if the SSC is involved this time, they should be involved earlier in the process. An FMAT/PDT member further suggested providing ongoing presentations to the SSC or a sub-group to keep them well-informed about the development of the management action.

One FMAT/PDT member suggested involving the SSC with the FMAT/PDT's consideration of using fishing mortality (F) based reference points for at least one of the alternatives. This FMAT/PDT member noted this was a concept discussed early in the process by the HCR FMAT/PDT, but had been put aside. A member of the SSC suggested using an F-based reference point for the Percent Change Approach at the last FMAT/PDT meeting for the HCR Framework/Addenda. The FMAT/PDT member noted that although the FMAT/PDT could figure out the methods, there could also be benefits to working with the SSC to further develop this idea.

Analysis Needs

Staff next requested any initial input the FMAT/PDT may have on analyses needed to support the development of this new management action. For example, an analysis on partitioning F-based reference points between the commercial and recreational sectors.

It was noted an Environmental Assessment will likely be needed, but a decision on the appropriate document to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act will not be able to be made until the specific topics of this management action are finalized.

A majority of the discussion was focused on a suggestion by an FMAT/PDT member to use the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) developed for summer flounder to provide a quantitative assessment of the risks and trade-offs associated with all the alternatives. Applying an MSE to the alternatives might address an issue raised during the previous iteration of the HCR Framework/Addenda about the binned approaches (i.e., Alternatives D and E). At that time, the binned approaches were designed to have measures assigned to each of the bins that were estimated to achieve a specified target level of harvest, catch, or fishing mortality. However, the RDM was not available, so the FMAT/PDT was unable to put forward example measures for the bins. As a result, the public and the Council/Policy Board did not believe they had enough information to compare the binned approach alternatives, as it was not clear what measures would look like if these alternatives were implemented. If the MSE is used as part of the development of this new management action, the FMAT/PDT could compare the performance of all the alternatives that will be developed for this new management action for each of the species.

It was also noted that the RDM is now available for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass and could be used to generate example measures for all the bins. An R Shiny app for the RDM is in development, which will allow for a more efficient analysis of how changes to the regulations would impact harvest, angler satisfaction, and other metrics. However, the RDM would only provide information on how

measures work under current biomass levels. The MSE uses a different biological model to explore how metrics change at different stock biomass levels. However, as previously noted, the MSE model is only available for summer flounder. One FMAT/PDT member mentioned previous discussions of potentially modifying the assumptions used in the RDM to analyze measures under different stock status conditions, for example, by modifying the availability of different size classes input into the model. An FMAT/PDT member familiar with the RDM said the MSE would be a much more appropriate model for analyzing the impacts of measures under different stock conditions as it is designed to achieve this purpose.

The FMAT/PDT was informed that the developers of the summer flounder MSE were interested in being involved in this effort, as it would illustrate how the MSE can be used for management purposes. The FMAT/PDT was in favor of further discussing this with the MSE modelers during their next meeting. It was noted that although the FMAT/PDT will discuss this idea further with the developers, this did not mean that this approach will necessarily be used during the development of this management action, as the FMAT/PDT still needs the Council/Board's approval to continue exploration of this approach.

A member of staff reminded the FMAT/PDT of an idea introduced by the previous FMAT/PDT for the binned approaches. It was proposed that moving to a new bin could be a trigger to revise measures to achieve the appropriate target level of harvest, dead catch, or fishing mortality, without the measures having been pre-determined. Several FMAT/PDT members supported considering this idea further during the development of the new management action. FMAT/PDT members were also reminded by staff that it is not required to focus only on how the alternatives were previously developed, but they can think creatively, as long as the FMAT/PDT works under the scope of the action as approved by the Council/Policy Board.

Management Action Name

A new name for this management action, to replace Harvest Control Rule 2.0, was suggested by staff: Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish Recreational Measures Setting Process Framework/Addenda. The FMAT/PDT unanimously approved this new name and the acronym "RMS" for short.

Public Comment

One member of the public asked how many of the species this management action applies to are currently at 150% B/B_{MSY} or above. Staff confirmed that at the time of this meeting, it was just scup and black sea bass, as summer flounder is in a low biomass category and bluefish is overfished. However, there will be management track assessments for scup, summer flounder, and bluefish this summer which may lead to updates in stock status. This member of the public also wanted to know if the FMAT/PDT was still considering using a recruitment-based metric in any of the options. The FMAT/PDT noted that it was a secondary metric in the Biological Reference Point Alternative, which will be further developed in this new management action. Lastly, this member of the public stated their support for involving the entire SSC in this new management action as this framework relies on multiple analyses. In addition, the SSC can also provide advice on the potential of overfishing with each of the alternatives. They were also very supportive of involving the SSC during the first iteration of the HCR.



**Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, and Bluefish
Harvest Control Rule 2.0 Framework/Addenda
Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT)/Plan Development Team (PDT)
Meeting #2 Summary
July 11, 2023**

FMAT/PDT Attendees: Tracey Bauer (ASMFC), Julia Beaty (MAFMC), Chelsea Tuohy (ASMFC), Mike Celestino (NJ DEP), Alexa Galvan (VMRC), Mark Grant (GARFO), Marianne Randall (GARFO), Scott Steinback (NEFSC), Rachel Sysak (NY DEC), Corinne Truesdale (RI DEM), Sam Truesdell (MA DMF), Sara Turner (GARFO)

Other Attendees: Lou Carr-Harris (NEFSC), Geret DePiper (NEFSC), Sarah Gaichas (NEFSC), James Fletcher (United National Fisherman’s Association/Council AP member), Michelle Duval (Council member), Alan Bianchi (NC DMF), Greg DiDomenico (Lund’s Fisheries/Council AP member), Will Poston (American Saltwater Guides Association)

Overview

The FMAT/PDT met via webinar on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 to review background information on the Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and discuss the feasibility of using it in the development of the Harvest Control Rule 2.0 Framework/Addenda.

Briefing materials considered by the FMAT/PDT are available at: <https://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2023/jul-11/sfsbsbb-hcr2-fmat-pdt>

Summer Flounder Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) Presentation by NEFSC Staff

Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) staff presented a summary of the Summer Flounder MSE’s modeling approach and outcomes, as well as a proposed potential application to the development of the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) 2.0 Framework/Addenda. NEFSC staff indicated the Summer Flounder MSE would be most effective as an approach to assess uncertainty across the alternatives and trade-offs between alternatives. It would allow the FMAT/PDT to test and refine all the alternatives, as well as potentially identify alternatives that are not performing as intended or that are not feasible to implement.

NEFSC staff proposed using a stepwise approach with the MSE to analyze the alternatives and assist in the development of the HCR 2.0 Framework/Addenda within the current timeline. The stepwise approach would first analyze broader concepts and then, if time allows, the analyses could get more complex, moving towards more realistic scenarios. The process, as proposed by NEFSC staff, would be as follows:

- 1) Initial analyses would focus on testing the performance of thresholds included in each alternative’s metrics (e.g., trends in biomass or recruitment, SSB/SSB_{MSY}), the definitions of those thresholds, and their associated uncertainty. Everything in the MSE would be held constant except the chosen threshold to test performance and compare across alternatives. The

thresholds could then be refined or, if necessary, the alternative could be discarded entirely if it is consistently performing poorly.

- 2) The management responses to crossing the thresholds could then be investigated by testing different definitions of “liberal” and “restrictive” measures or testing different target levels of harvest, catch, or fishing mortality of the different bins.
- 3) Lastly, if time allows, the MSE could test the performance of potential regulations within alternatives. However, due to limited time, regulations may only be developed and tested for one alternative (e.g., potentially narrowed down by the previous two steps) and regulations may be simplified compared to current regulations (e.g., coastwide or regional measures may be evaluated, rather than state-specific regulations).

NEFSC staff noted several important considerations if the Summer Flounder MSE is used during the development of this management action:

- The FMAT/PDT will need to define starting points for measures and thresholds of metrics before any analysis with the MSE can begin.
- Analyses completed using the MSE will need to be prioritized to remain within the current timeline of the HCR 2.0 Framework/Addenda, which must be finalized before the original HCR Framework/Addenda sunsets at the end of 2025. In addition, prioritizing how the MSE is used will help the modelers and the FMAT/PDT avoid getting too caught up with the complexity of some of the current alternatives.
- There will need to be clearly defined roles for both the modeling team and the FMAT/PDT to maximize efficiency.
- Transparency in how the MSE can be used in the development of this management action will be important to manage expectations of the Policy Board (Policy Board), Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), and public. For example, it’s not likely there will be enough time to test regulations at the state level; however, the performance of the specific metrics under each alternative can be evaluated at the state level.

Discussion

The FMAT/PDT supported using a stepwise approach with the MSE and agreed it will be helpful to think about the roles of the FMAT/PDT and modelers. For example, what the FMAT/PDT would provide versus what the modelers will need to work on will need to be identified. The Council and Policy Board will tentatively approve a draft document in about a year. It will be important to have some analysis completed by then, so Council and Policy Board members are able to make an informed decision about what alternatives to keep in the document for public comment. NEFSC staff agreed, noting that this highlights the importance of prioritizing analyses to meet those deadlines. The group needs to identify the most important questions to focus on.

Another FMAT/PDT member noted that the Policy Board/Council adopted the Percent Change Approach originally because the complexity of some of the other alternatives and lack of example measures made it challenging to evaluate what implementing the other approaches would look like. The Percent Change Approach was the simplest alternative, and there was not enough time to assess the relative performance of the other options.

One FMAT/PDT member asked if Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Review Panel comments about the Recreational Demand Model (RDM; one of the components of the MSE) have been addressed, or how addressing them would fit into the timeline. NEFSC staff responded there has been a lot of work to address these comments and a short report was written to summarize how the RDM was updated to address the Review Panel's concerns. For example, the RDM, and consequently the MSE were updated to use survey data from 2020, giving an improved representation of angler preferences. They also incorporated additional layers of uncertainty from MRIP into the model. NEFSC staff are currently working on updating the model for this upcoming year's recreational management measures setting process and creating a Shiny app so Monitoring and Technical Committee members can run the RDM on their own. In addition, NEFSC staff are in the process of generating appropriate catch-per-trip distributions for reference years from MRIP to estimate future catch-per-trip.

An FMAT/PDT member noted that the projection period in the original Summer Flounder MSE analysis was 26 years, and questioned if this was an appropriate projection period for an analysis of the HCR 2.0 Framework/Addenda alternatives given the different goals. Alternatives may perform differently based on the length of the projection period. NEFSC staff agreed that this was something the group would need to think about and discuss before any analysis. It will be important to decide what metrics should be analyzed over a short term versus a long term (e.g., angler satisfaction every year versus stock status over many years). In general, MSEs are developed to look at long-term performance. Another FMAT/PDT member said it would be useful to have the projection period long enough to compare the previous method for setting measures (i.e., the goal to meet but not exceed the RHL every year) and the binned approaches (i.e., leave regulations alone over a wide range of conditions until a threshold is crossed). A long-term trend may be able to test stability of measures compared to the outcomes of those measures.

An FMAT/PDT member asked if anything can be concluded or inferred about the performance of the alternatives for black sea bass, scup, and bluefish using the MSE, given that the MSE was developed for summer flounder specifically. The RDM has been developed for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass, but will not be developed for bluefish given the high amount of catch and release in the fishery. NEFSC staff confirmed this would be a summer flounder-centric approach and did not recommend adding in population dynamics to the MSE for any other species given the tight timeline. However, they did suggest the information learned about the performance of the alternatives for summer flounder may be able to inform decisions for the other species. In addition, NEFSC staff proposed that parameters of the MSE could be changed to reflect the status of other species, and then used to test the performance of alternatives. For example, a higher overfishing limit (OFL) could be implemented in the model, additional uncertainty could be added, or start with a higher biomass. Another FMAT/PDT member agreed that the MSE may be able to answer general questions about the performance of the alternatives for scup, black sea bass and bluefish, but this will not cover all species-specific differences. An FMAT/PDT member also noted that adjusting parameters in the MSE to reflect the status of other species will also have implications for the projection periods that were just discussed. This member believed a longer projection period could also be more useful here because the results would not be driven by initial conditions.

Next Steps

The Council and Policy Board will discuss use of the MSE during their August 2023 meeting. If they give their approval to use the MSE in the development of alternatives for the HCR 2.0 Framework/Addenda, the FMAT/PDT and NEFSC staff will plan future meetings to carry out this work. In the meantime, FMAT/PDT members and NEFSC staff are encouraged to continue to think about 1) how the MSE may or may not be able to assist in the development of this management action and 2) what MSE metrics should be used to measure success, and 3) recommendations of thresholds for metrics in the alternatives. It was also noted that, if the Council/Policy Board give their approval, the earlier the group can start working on this, the better.

Public Comment

One member of the public asked how the HCR 2.0 Framework/Addenda will consider summer flounder's new stock status of overfishing. Staff noted the summer flounder 2024-2025 specifications discussion, which will take into consideration summer flounder's overfishing status, will occur before the Policy Board/Council discusses this management action. In addition, many of the alternatives already have consideration for overfishing built into them.

Another member of the public asked how the fishermen will have any confidence in the models when the models still recommend catching the largest, oldest female fish. NEFSC staff noted that during the development of the Summer Flounder MSE, there were similar conversations about the ways to track the harvest of male and females in the model. The model does not contain any differential stock dynamics, but the harvest of males and females was used as an indicator of performance. NEFSC staff's preference is to not stray too far from the actual model originally used in management support. However, there are ways to address this concern.