Guide to the Recreational Harvest Control Rule Draft Addenda/Framework

Background

- Numerous challenges currently exist for management of summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish including uncertainty in the recreational harvest data, the need to change measures (sometimes annually) based on those data, and recreational measures (bag, size and season) not reflecting stock status.
- To address these challenges the MAFMC/ASMFC jointly developed different management options for input.
- Key differences between the options include the information considered when setting measures and the circumstances under which measures would change.
- Considering the complexities of these options, we developed the following summary and decision tree that you can use in combination with ASMFC's Options Reference Guide to provide input at a public hearing or via email by April 22 to comments@asmfc.org
- ASA's position is to support options that include more information than just recreational harvest data to determine recreational measures. While picking a specific alternative at this stage is challenging because outcomes are unknown, it is critical that managers continue to explore these alternatives and identify which provides the best management outcomes. Above all else, we do not support status quo.

Summary of the Options for Setting Recreational Management Measures

A: status quo – measures can change annually based on recent harvest compared to the harvest limit

- If recent harvest is lower than the harvest limit, the measures are liberalized and if recent harvest exceeds the harvest limit, measures are restricted.
- Management changes rely solely on recreational harvest data from MRIP
- In 2022, option A resulted in a:
    - 21% reduction in black sea bass despite being more than double its biomass target (very healthy)
    - 33% reduction in scup despite being almost double its biomass target (very healthy)
    - 16.5% liberalization for fluke despite being below its biomass target (less healthy)

B: Percent Change Approach

- Most like status quo, but the variability and uncertainty of MRIP recreational harvest data is accounted for when determining if changes to the measures are needed
- Information considered when determining changes in measures:
    - stock size and harvest data compared to harvest limit with uncertainty accounted for
- In 2022, option B would have resulted in:
    - 0% or 10% reduction in black sea bass because biomass is more than double its target (very healthy)
    - 0% or 10% reduction in scup because biomass is almost double its target (very healthy)
    - 10% reduction for fluke because it is below its biomass target (less healthy)

C: Fishery Score Approach

- Uses 4 sets of measures with a scoring process to determine when to move between sets of measures. Scoring is evaluated after completion of stock assessments.
- Information considered when determining changes in measures:
    - stock size, recruitment level, fishing mortality, recent harvest data
- High scores represent the best conditions and the most liberal measures, and low scores represent the worst conditions and most restrictive measures
- Measures change less frequently with greater magnitude because there are only 4 sets of measures

- In 2022, option C would have resulted in:
    - Unknown % reductions/liberalizations because this approach relies on modeling to determine the 4 sets of measures and modeling is currently incomplete.
- Therefore, supporting option C involves trusting that the modeling process will produce bag, size and seasons that better reflect stock status than the current approach (option A).

D: Biological Reference Point Approach
- Uses 13 sets of measures that scale using an evaluation of the most amount of information
- Information considered when determining changes in measures:
    - stock size and trend, recruitment level, fishing mortality, recent harvest
- Measures change more frequently with less magnitude because there are 13 sets of measures
- In 2022, option D would have resulted in:
    - Unknown % reductions/liberalizations because this approach relies on modeling to determine the 13 sets of measures and modeling is currently incomplete.
- Therefore, supporting option D involves trusting that the modeling process will produce bag, size and seasons that better reflect stock status than the current approach (option A).

E: Biomass Based Matrix Approach
- Uses 6 sets of measures based only on stock size and trend.
- This option is the least reliant on recreational harvest data
- In 2022, option E would have resulted in:
    - Unknown % reductions/liberalizations because this approach relies on modeling to determine the 6 sets of measures and modeling is currently incomplete.
- Therefore, supporting option E involves trusting that the modeling process will produce bag, size and seasons that better reflect stock status than the current approach (option A).

Decision Tree for HCR Options– Once you arrive at a final option(s), we recommend confirming your selection with the summary of options above. Note: you can support more than one option.

Are you satisfied with the process that has resulted in current measures (bag, size and season) for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and/or bluefish?
- No – Support B, C, D, E
- Yes – Support A

Options C, D and E rely on model approaches that are still being developed to establish what the harvest level and measures would be. Is it critical to you to know the expected outcome of measures when selecting a different process for setting measures?
- No – Support C, D, E
- Yes – Support B

Option E relies the least on estimates of recreational harvest. Do you support an approach that is only guided by stock size and stock trend and is the least reliant on estimates of recreational harvest?
- No – Support C, D
- Yes – Support E

Options C and D use the most amount of information on stock condition to establish management measures that scale with stock status. Do you prefer measures that change less frequently with greater magnitude or more frequently with less magnitude?
- Less frequent, but greater magnitude of change (4 sets of measures) – Support C
- Most frequent, but smaller magnitude of change (13 sets of measures) – Support D