

Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment

Alternatives Reference Guide

How to Use This Reference Guide

This reference guide provides a quick overview of the alternatives under consideration in this amendment. This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the amendment [Public Hearing Document](#), which provides more detail on the alternatives and their basis as well as possible impacts. The tables, sections, and appendices referenced throughout this document are all contained in the Public Hearing Document. **We strongly encourage all interested individuals to review the full Public Hearing Document before submitting comments.** Informed comments on these alternatives cannot be made based on this document alone without also considering the background and implications described in the Public Hearing Document.

The final section on page 5 includes several decision trees. These decision trees are intended to guide the flow of selecting alternatives as decisions in one section will dictate how other alternative sets should be interpreted. Decision trees 1-3 are included to help guide public comment on those sections that are tied together (i.e., Sections 5, 6, and 7).

Introduction

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) are jointly developing the Bluefish Allocation and Rebuilding Amendment. This amendment considers:

1. Revisions to the fishery management plan (FMP) goals and objectives;
2. Modifying the current allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors;
3. Modifying the current commercial allocations to the states;
4. Initiation of a rebuilding plan;
5. Revisions to the quota transfer process;
6. Revisions to how the FMP accounts for management uncertainty; and
7. Revisions to the *de minimis* provisions in the Commission's FMP.

How to Provide Comments

Comments may be submitted at any of five virtual public hearings to be held between March 24 and April 8, 2021 or via written comment through April 23, 2021. Please visit <https://www.mafmc.org/bluefish-amendment> for a hearing schedule and instructions for submitting comments.

To be most effective, we request that you identify which alternative you support in each of the categories. It is helpful to include specific details as to why you support or oppose a particular alternative.

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SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES

Note: Table numbers referenced throughout this section refer to the table numbers in the [Public Hearing Document](#).

1. Fishery Management Plan Goals and Objectives

Public Hearing Document Section 4.0

This amendment considers revisions to the FMP goals and objectives. While these revisions are not included as an explicit alternative, the Council and Board will need to approve the revised goals and objectives through this amendment. The current and proposed FMP goals and objectives can be found in the [Public Hearing Document](#).

2. Commercial/Recreational Allocations

Public Hearing Document Section 5.0

[Commercial/Recreational Allocation Alternatives \(Table 1\)](#)

This alternative set considers changes to the allocation of bluefish between the commercial and recreational sectors. The current allocations are highlighted in green. Alternatives 2a-2 through 2a-5 would revise allocations based on updated data using modified base years. It is important to note that while the proposed allocation percentages directly affect the annual commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits, these limits are also influenced by total catch limits, recent discard trends, and other factors.

Allocation Percentages	
Alternative	Basis
2a-1: 83% recreational, 17% commercial	No action/status quo (1981-1989 landings data)
2a-2: 89% recreational, 11% commercial	Multiple approaches: 2014-2018 and 2009-2018 catch data
2a-3: 87% recreational, 13% commercial	1999-2018 catch data
2a-4: 86% recreational, 14% commercial	Multiple approaches: 1981-2018 catch data; 2014-2018 and 2009-2018 landings data
2a-5: 84% recreational, 16% commercial	Multiple approaches: 1981-2018 and 1999-2018 landings data

[Allocation Change Phase-In Alternatives \(Table 4\)](#)

This alternative set considers whether any changes to the allocation percentages should occur in a single year or if the change should be spread over multiple years.

Phase-in Alternatives
2b-1: No phase-in
2b-2: Allocation change spread evenly over the same duration as the selected rebuilding plan

3. Commercial Allocations to the States

Public Hearing Document Section 6.0

This section contains four alternative sets related to commercial bluefish allocations to the states.

[Commercial Allocations to the States Alternatives \(Table 6\)](#)

The table below lists the alternatives under consideration for the bluefish commercial allocations to the states using only landings data since commercial discards are considered negligible. The percent allocations represent the share of coastwide quota that is annually allocated to each state. The current allocations are represented by

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the no action/status quo alternative (alternative 3a-1, highlighted in green in Table 6). Alternatives 3a-2 through 3a-4 propose modifications to state allocations based on updated data using modified base years.

Landings-Based Allocation Alternatives				
State	3a-1	3a-2	3a-3	3a-4
	No action/ Status quo (1981-1989)	5 year (2014-2018)	10 year (2009-2018)	1/2 '81-'89 1/2 '09-'18
ME	0.67%	0.00%	0.01%	0.49%
NH	0.41%	0.03%	0.12%	0.33%
MA	6.72%	10.64%	10.16%	7.66%
RI	6.81%	11.81%	9.64%	7.59%
CT	1.27%	1.18%	1.00%	1.19%
NY	10.39%	20.31%	19.94%	13.01%
NJ	14.82%	11.23%	13.94%	14.57%
DE	1.88%	0.58%	0.40%	1.47%
MD	3.00%	1.50%	1.84%	2.68%
VA	11.88%	4.62%	5.85%	10.26%
NC	32.06%	32.06%	32.38%	32.13%
SC	0.04%	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%
GA	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.01%
FL	10.06%	6.07%	4.75%	8.59%
Total	100.02%	100.01%	100.03%	100.00%

Commercial Allocation Change Phase-In Alternatives (Table 8)

This alternative set considers if any changes to the allocation percentages considered through alternative set 3a should occur in a single year (alternative 3b-1, no phase-in) or if the change should be spread out over 4, 5, or 7 years (alternative 3b-2). The Council and Board agreed that if alternative 3b-2 is selected, the duration over which new allocations will be phased in will match the duration of the selected rebuilding plan (section 7).

Phase-in Alternatives
3b-1: No phase-in
3b-2: Allocation change spread evenly over the same duration as the selected rebuilding plan

Commercial Quota Trigger Alternatives (Table 10)

This alternative set describes options to implement quota-based triggers that would reallocate any commercial quota that exceeds a specified threshold. This alternative set could allow state allocations to vary with overall stock abundance and resulting coastwide commercial quotas.

Commercial Quota Time Series	No Trigger Alternative: 3c-1	Pre-Transfer Alternative: 3c-2	Post-Transfer Alternative: 3c-3
No Action/Status quo [3a-1]	No trigger approach implemented	N/A	N/A
5-year (2014-2018) [3a-2]		3.67 M lbs	6.67 M lbs
10-year (2009-2018) [3a-3]		4.31 M lbs	8.21 M lbs
½ 1981-1989 and ½ 2009-2018 [3a-4]		4.31 M lbs*	8.21 M lbs*

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Commercial Minimum Default Allocation Alternatives (Table 13)

This alternative set considers whether to establish minimum default commercial quota allocations for each state within the bluefish management unit. A minimum default allocation provides each state with a fixed minimum percentage allocation of the coastwide commercial quota, and the remainder would be allocated based on the commercial allocation alternative selected from alternative set 3a.

Minimum Default Allocation Alternatives	
3d-1	No Action/Status quo: No Minimum Default Allocation
3d-2	0.10% Minimum Default Allocation
3d-3	0.25% Minimum Default Allocation

4. Rebuilding Plan

Public Hearing Document Section 7.0

This section contains four rebuilding plan alternatives. The no action option (4a) is included only as a formality, as the Council is legally bound to develop a rebuilding plan.

Rebuilding Plan Alternatives (Table 16)

Alternative	Rebuilding Plan	Duration	Adjustment to Council Risk Policy
4a	No Action/ Status Quo	N/A	N/A
4b	Constant Harvest	4 years	No
4c	P* (Council Risk Policy)	5 years	N/A
4d	Constant Fishing Mortality	7 years	Yes

5. Quota Transfer Provisions

Public Hearing Document Section 8.0

The following alternatives describe options for allowing annual transfers of quota between the commercial and recreational sectors as part of the specifications setting process (i.e., the annual process of setting or reviewing catch and landings limits for the upcoming fishing year).

Sector Transfer Provisions Alternatives (Table 20)

This alternative set offers the ability for transfers to occur bi-directionally between the commercial and recreational sectors (alternative 5a-2). The status quo alternative (5a-1) only allows for quota transfers from the recreational to commercial fishery.

Alternatives	Annual Quota Transfer Alternatives
5a-1	No Action/Status Quo
5a-2	Allow for optional bi-directional transfers through the annual specifications process with pre-defined guidelines and process. The transfer would consist of a portion of the total ABC in the form of a landings limit (i.e., commercial quota and RHL) transfer. Transfers would not occur if the stock is overfished or overfishing is occurring.

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Transfer Cap Alternatives (Table 22)

This alternative set considers whether to establish a cap on the amount that can be transferred between sectors.

Alternatives	Transfer Cap
5b-1	No Action/Status Quo
5b-2	Up to 10% of the ABC

6. Management Uncertainty Alternatives

Public Hearing Document Section 9.0

This alternative set considers modifications to the process for accounting for management uncertainty in the specification setting process. Under the status quo alternative (6a), a single management uncertainty buffer is applied to the commercial and recreational sectors equally. Alternative 6b would allow for management uncertainty to be accounted for within each sector.

Management Uncertainty Alternatives (Table 24)

Alternatives	Management Uncertainty Alternatives
6a	No Action/Status Quo
6b	Post-Sector Split

7. De Minimis Provisions

Public Hearing Document Section 10.0

This section considers modifications to the *de minimis* provisions contained in the Commission’s FMP. For a more detailed description of each *de minimis* alternative, please reference Section 10 of the Public Hearing Document.

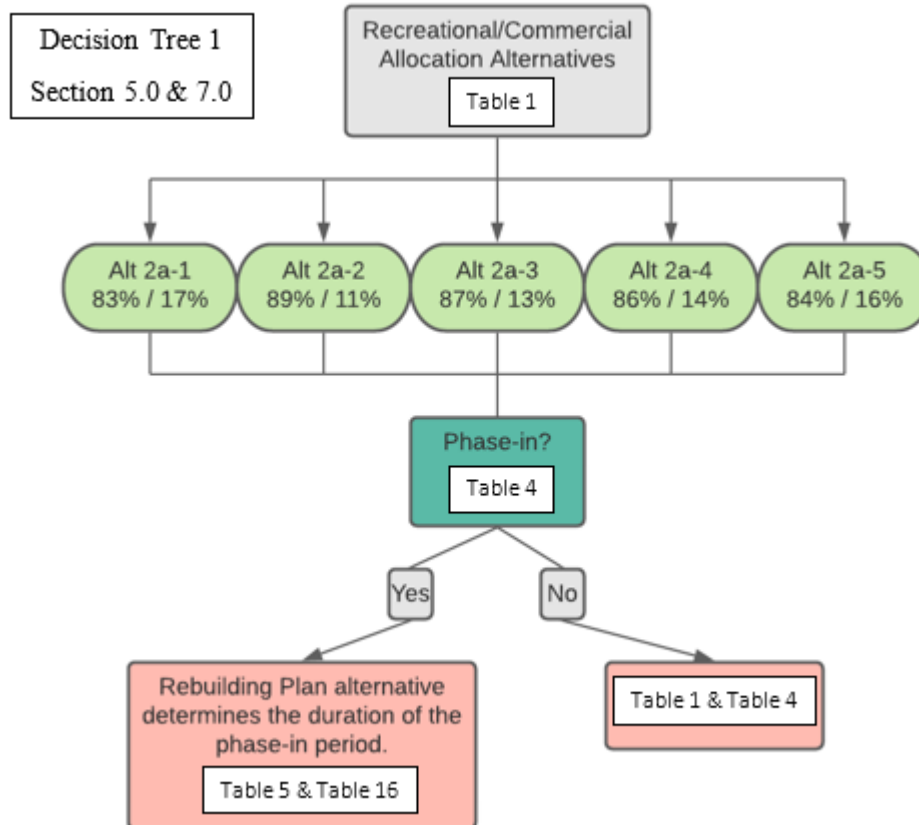
De Minimis Provisions Alternatives (Table 25)

Alternatives	De Minimis Alternatives
7a	No Action/Status Quo
7b	Recreational <i>De Minimis</i> – no management measures
7c	Recreational <i>De Minimis</i> – state-selected management measures
7d	Recreational <i>De Minimis</i> – rollover management measures
7e	Recreational <i>De Minimis</i> – 2020 management measures

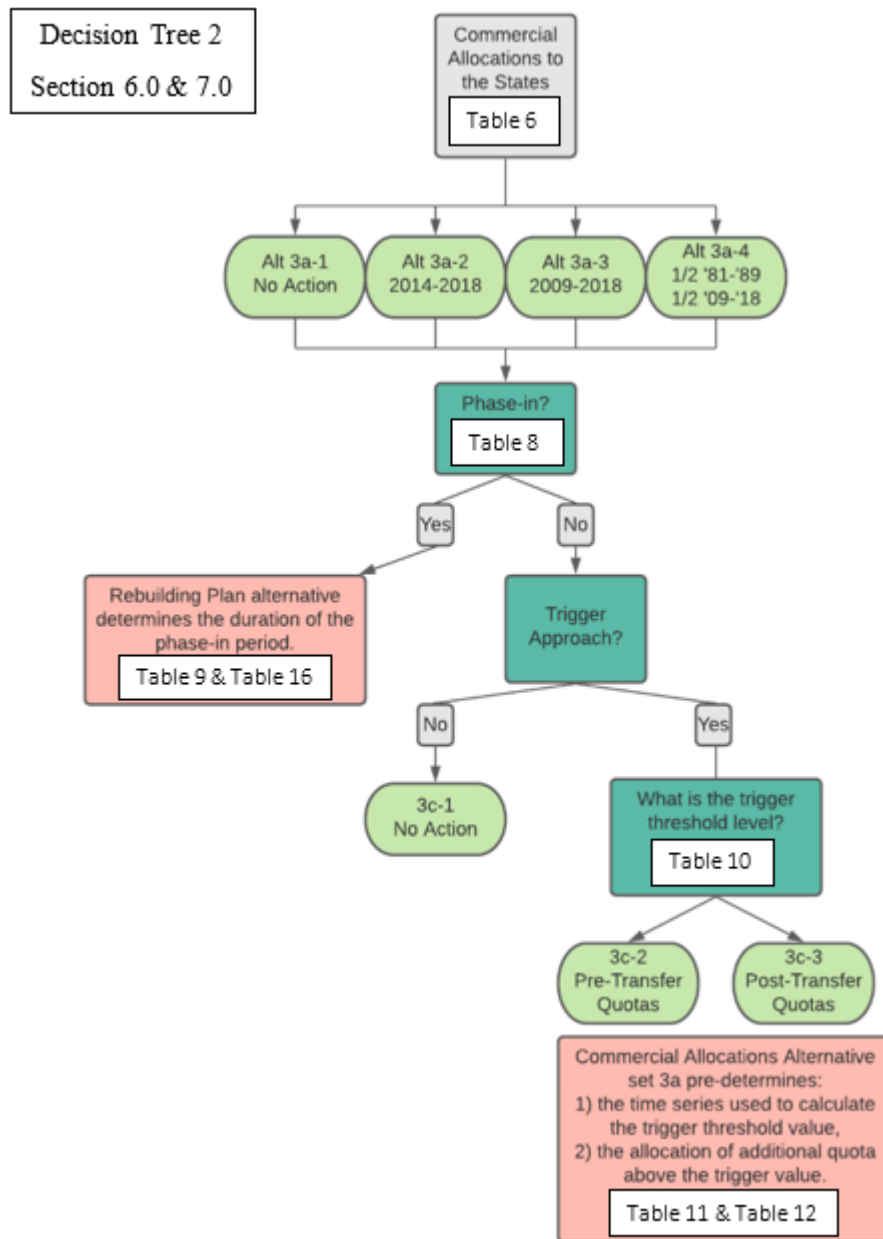
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Decision Trees

Decision trees are included to help guide the flow of commenting on alternatives as some decisions may impact the alternatives that will be selected in different alternative sets. For example, if a phase-in alternative is selected in either the sector allocations or commercial allocations to the states alternative set, the duration as to how long the allocations will be phased-in will match the durations of the preferred rebuilding alternative. **Note:** The tables listed in the decision trees directly reference the tables within the Public Hearing Document.



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