Director's Report

Volume 28, Issue 3
June/July 2019

ASMFC
FISHERIES focus
Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ASMFC Summer Meeting

August 6 - 8

The Westin
1800 South Eads Street
Arlington, VA

Preliminary Agenda

The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. **Executive Committee**
(*A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only*)

- Consider Policy Addressing Non-Payment of State Assessments
- Consider Proposed Revision to the Annual Report
- Update on Transitioning the For-hire Telephone Survey to State/ACCSP Conduct
- Discuss Commission Involvement in Biosecurity and Bait Sources

10:15 a.m. – Noon **South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board**

- Consider Approval of Atlantic Cobia Amendment 1
- Progress Update on Draft Addenda for Atlantic Croaker and Spot Traffic Light Analyses
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance Reports for Atlantic Cobia, Atlantic Croaker, and Red Drum

Noon – 1:15 p.m. **Legislators and Governors' Appointees Luncheon**

1:30– 2:30 p.m. **American Eel Management Board**

- Review Board Working Group Recommendations on Addressing Coastwide Cap Overages
- Review and Consider Approval of Aquaculture Proposals

SUMMER MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued on page 6

Upcoming Meetings

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

July 22 (begins at 1 PM) & 23 (ends at Noon)
SEAMAP South Atlantic, Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI), 100 8th Ave SE, St. Petersburg, FL

July 23 (begins at 1 PM) & 24 (ends at Noon)
Joint SEAMAP Meeting, FWRI, 100 8th Ave SE, St. Petersburg, FL

July 25 (1 - 3 PM)
Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel Conference Call; see http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/horseshoe-crab-advisory-panel-conf-call/1405 for more details

August 6 - 8
ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin, 1800 South Eads Street, Arlington, VA

August 13 - 15
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown, 21 N. Juniper St., Philadelphia, PA

August 19 (1 - 5 PM)
Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Ecological Reference Points Workgroup webinar; see http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2019/Atl-Menhaden-Stock-Assessment-Subcomm-and-Ecological-Reference-Points-Workgroup-Conf-Call-/1421 for more details

August 19 (1:30 - 3:30 PM)
ASMFC & MAFMC Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel Webinar; see http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2019/asmfc-and-mafmc-spiny-dogfish-advisory-panel-webinar/1413 for more details

August 26 (9 AM - Noon)
ASMFC & MAFMC Bluefish Advisory Panel Webinar; see http://www.mafmc.org/council-events/2019/bluefish-ap-webinar-aug-26 for more details

August 29 (9 AM - 1 PM)
Assessment Science Committee Conference Call; see http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2019/assessment-science-committee-conf-call/1416 for more details

August 29 (10 AM - 3:30 PM)
ASMFC & MAFMC Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Advisory Panel; DoubleTree by Hilton BWI, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum Heights, MD

September 16 - 20
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC

September 24 - 26
New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA

October 8 - 10
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Durham Convention Center, 301 W. Morgan Street, Durham, NC

October 27 - 31
ASMFC Annual Meeting, Wentworth by the Sea, 588 Wentworth Road, New Castle, NH

November 19 - 21
SEDAR 58 Atlantic Cobia Peer Review Workshop, location to be determined.

A Continued Commitment to Restoration and Management Can Make a Difference for River Herring

In June, NOAA Fisheries announced the findings of its status review of alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*) stocks (collectively referred to as river herring) along the Atlantic coast. The status review, performed under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), determined listing these species under the ESA is not warranted at this time.

The review noted while river herring have declined from historical numbers and overutilization remains a risk while population numbers are low, fisheries management efforts at the state and federal levels have helped reduce the risks from fishing mortality. In particular, implementation of Amendment 2 to the Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Shad and River Herring, which requires the closure of state river herring fisheries without an approved sustainable fisheries management plan, has been central in managing fishery impacts to these species.

The Commission's 2017 River Herring Stock Assessment Update was an important component of the status review. The Update found while population abundance of river herring within certain rivers continues to be depleted, other river systems are showing signs of improvement, with increasing abundance trends for a number of rivers in the Mid-Atlantic and throughout New England. Although abundance in these river systems remains at low levels, dam removals and improvements to fish passage have had a positive impact on run returns.

- On Maine's Penobscot River, the removal of two dams and the installation of fish passage at others opened nearly 1,000 miles of habitat to migratory fish.
- On Maryland's Patapsco River, the removal of Bloede Dam, a linchpin of a decades-long restoration effort that also included the removal of Simkins and Union Dams, restored more than 65 miles of spawning habitat for blueback herring, alewife, American shad, and hickory shad in the watershed, and more than 183 miles for American eel. In total, Maryland's Fish Passage program has completed 79 projects, reopening a total of 457 miles of upstream spawning habitat in Maryland since 2005.
- In May 2016, the first dam upstream of the confluence with the Hudson River was removed from the Wynants Kill, a relatively small tributary in Troy, New York, downstream of the Federal Dam. Within days of its removal, hundreds of river herring moved past the former dam location into upstream habitat. Subsequent sampling efforts yielded river herring eggs, providing evidence that river herring were actively spawning in the newly available habitat. This dam removal provides an additional 192 acres of spawning habitat for river herring that has not been available for 85 years.
- In Connecticut, where there are over 500 dams within the historic range of river herring, fishway construction and dam removals have restored access to previously blocked spawning habitat, allowing for increased production. Since 1990, 11 dams have been removed and 53 fishways have been constructed throughout Connecticut, with more projects being completed each year.
- In Pennsylvania, dam removals and fish passage installations have opened up 100 river miles to migratory fish. Other states, such as New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Delaware have invested in the use of fish passage techniques to aid in river herring restoration by re-opening acres of freshwater spawning and nursery habitat for the species.

The continued recovery of river herring demands the states and our federal partners continue our commitment to improve management policy in tandem with habitat restoration.

While the findings of the status review are encouraging, we still have a long way to go until these species are fully rebuilt throughout their range. A variety of threats, including dams and other barriers to fish passage, continue to limit species recovery. Since 2012, the Commission has partnered with NOAA Fisheries on a number of initiatives to aid in the restoration of river herring populations. These include providing state and local agencies with restoration project funding, leading to dam removals and fish passage improvement projects; coordinating the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group to increase public awareness about river herring and foster cooperative research and conservation efforts; and working with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to establish shad and river herring catch caps in fisheries that are known to incidentally capture these species. The continued recovery of river herring demands the states and our federal partners continue our commitment to improve management policy in tandem with habitat restoration.

Later on in this issue, you can read more about river herring life history, commercial and recreational fisheries and management, as well as some innovative research by scientists at East Carolina University who are exploring the use of environmental DNA to aid in species monitoring.

State Management Aiding in Recovery of Depleted River Herring Stocks; NOAA Fisheries Status Review Finds Endangered Species Act Listing Unwarranted

Introduction

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Shad and River Herring, approved in 1985, was among the first FMPs to be developed by the Commission. Since that time, the Commission has undertaken three major amendments to the plan. Amendment 2, approved in 2009, ushered in a new management regime for these important forage fish; one that required Atlantic coastal states and jurisdictions to either document the sustainability of their fisheries or prohibit recreational and commercial fishing for river herring. A 2017 stock assessment update determined that while river herring remain depleted on a coastwide basis, improvements have been observed in several river systems. This update provided significant rationale for NOAA Fisheries' June 2019 status review, which determined that listing river herring under the Endangered Species Act was not warranted at this time. Despite the species' overall low abundance, state management, including dam removals and improvements to fish passage, have helped increase abundance in some locations along the East Coast.

As river herring are migratory species that traverse both state and federal waters, the Commission has also worked closely with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (MAFMC and NEFMC, respectively) to reduce river herring bycatch in small-mesh fisheries. In June 2019, NEFMC established catch caps in the Atlantic herring fishery for 2020-2021 to reduce incidental harvest of river herring, while MAFMC is currently developing Framework 13 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP to set 2020-2021 catch caps for the Atlantic mackerel fishery.

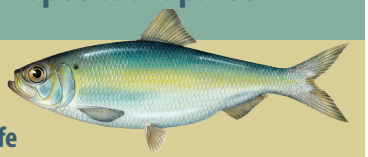
Life History

River herring, which is the collective term for alewife and blueback herring, are anadromous fish that spend the majority of their adult lives at sea, but return to freshwater areas to spawn in the spring. Alewife spawn in rivers, lakes, and tributaries from northeastern Newfoundland to South Carolina, but are most abundant in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Blueback herring prefer to spawn in swift flowing rivers and tributaries from Nova Scotia to northern Florida, but are most numerous in waters from the Chesapeake Bay south.

Photo (c) Jerry Prezioso, NOAA Fisheries

Mature alewife (ages three to eight) and blueback herring (ages three to six) migrate rapidly downstream after spawning. Juveniles remain in tidal freshwater nursery areas in the spring

Species Snapshot



Alewife

Alosa pseudoharengus

General Characteristics

- Adults average 10-11" in length; 8-9 oz. in weight
- Range from Nova Scotia to South Carolina
- Primarily feed on plankton
- Congregate in large schools, numbering in the thousands
- Excellent food fish, marketed both fresh and salted

Interesting Facts

- In the US, alewife are known as sawbelly, grayback, bigeye, and freshwater and spring herring. In Canada, they are known as gaspereau or kiack.
- The origin of the name alewife is a reference to the large belly of the fish, which reminded New England fishermen of alehouse wives.
- The Latin name *pseudoharengus* means "false herring."

Blueback Herring

Alosa aestivalis

General Characteristics

- Adults average 11" in length; 7 oz. in weight
- Range from Nova Scotia to Northern Florida
- Primarily feed on plankton
- Name derived from dark blue/bluish gray coloring on back

Interesting Facts

- Blueback herring are also known as summer herring or black belly.
- Blueback herring have teeth on the roof of their mouths, while alewife do not. The teeth disappear with age.

Stock Status

Varies by river system for both species; see Table 1 on page 10

and early summer, but may also move upstream with the encroachment of saline water. As water temperatures decline in the fall, juveniles move downstream to more saline waters. Little information is available on the life history of juvenile and adult river herring between their emigration from freshwater to the sea and their return to their natal river to spawn.

Commercial and Recreational Fisheries

River herring supported one of the oldest documented fisheries in North America, including significant commercial, recreational and subsistence fisheries throughout their range. During colonial times, in-river stocks of anadromous species like river herring became subject to intensive exploitation as well as habitat degradation related to clear-cutting for timber, damming for mills, and wetland conversion to agricultural lands. For Massachusetts, the decline in coastal alewife fisheries had become so extensive that between 1790 and 1860 regulations were adopted for most Massachusetts rivers to manage in-river alewife fisheries. In North Carolina, river herring were the most economically important finfish harvested during the late 1880s, but by 1918 Atlantic menhaden had become more economically viable than river herring.

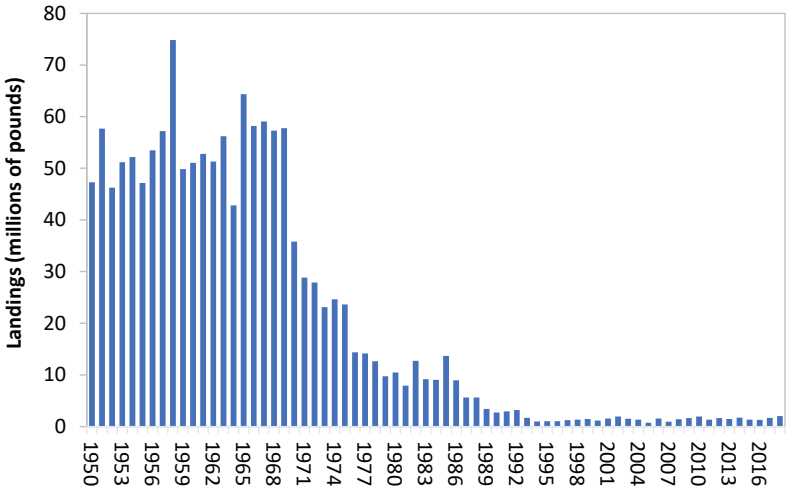
River herring have shifted from being used as a major local food source for human consumption in the form of smoked, salted and/or pickled fish toward being used primarily for fishmeal, pet food ingredients, and bait for commercial and sport fishing. During the 20th century, river herring also supported a small commercial bait industry in the New England states. These harvests declined considerably throughout New England between the turn of the 20th century and the 1980s.

Commercial landings for both species have declined dramatically from historic highs. Domestic landings reached their peak in 1958 at 74.9 million pounds, while total landings by domestic and foreign fleets peaked at 140 million pounds in 1969. Since 2000, domestic landings have totaled less than two million pounds in any given year, with a historic low of 733,605 pounds landed in 2005. Landings in 2018 were estimated at two million pounds, a 19.3% increase from 2017 levels.

THE RIVER FISHERIES OF THE ATLANTIC STATES.
Haul-seine fishing at Sutton Beach, Albemarle Sound, North Carolina: a large haul of alewives. (Sect. v. vol. I, p. 636.). From a photograph © NOAA Fisheries.

Although recreational harvest data are scarce, most harvest is believed to come from the commercial industry.

River Herring Commercial Landings
Source: ACCSP Data Warehouse, 2019



Stock Status

The 2012 river herring benchmark stock assessment evaluated the species on a river-by-river basis where data were available. For the vast majority of rivers, insufficient data were available to conduct a model-based stock assessment. Instead, trend analysis was used to identify patterns in the available fishery-dependent and independent data sets. Of the 52 stocks of alewife and blueback herring assessed, 23 were depleted relative to historic levels, one was increasing, and the status of 28 stocks could not be determined because the time series of available data was too short. Estimates of abundance and fishing mortality could not be developed due to lack of data. The "depleted" determination was used instead of "overfished" and "overfishing" because many factors, not just directed and incidental fishing, have contributed to the low abundance of river herring.

The 2017 stock assessment update indicates that river herring remain depleted at near historic lows on a coastwide basis. Total mortality estimates for 2013-2015 are generally high and exceed region-specific reference

continued, see RIVER HERRING on page 10

Summer Meeting Preliminary Agenda (cont'd)

2:45 – 3:30 p.m. **Horseshoe Crab Management Board**

- Consider Potential Management Response to the 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports

3:45 – 5:15 p.m. **Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Progress Update on Menhaden Single Species and Ecological Reference Point Benchmark Stock Assessments
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports
- Set 2020 Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Specifications

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7

8:30 – 10:30 a.m. **Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board**

- Review 2019 Performance of the Stocks Report
- Review and Consider Approval of ISFMP Guiding Documents
- Update on American Lobster Enforcement Vessel
- Committee Reports
- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations (If Necessary)

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. **Committee on Economics and Social Sciences**

- Review Ongoing Committee Activities
- Discuss Efforts to Increase the Availability and Use of Socioeconomic Information in Management
- Review Committee Input on the Commission's Draft Risk and Uncertainty Policy

10:30 – 10:45 a.m. **Business Session**

- Consider Approval of Atlantic Cobia Amendment 1
- Consider Noncompliance Recommendations (If Necessary)

11:00 a.m. – Noon **Spiny Dogfish Management Board**

- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum VI for Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports

12:45 – 3:30 p.m. **Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**

- Review Potential Black Sea Bass Commercial Management Strategies and Consider Initiating Management Action to Address Commercial Allocation
- Progress Update on the Recreational Management Reform Working Group
- Update on Management Strategy Evaluation of Summer Flounder Recreational Fishery Project
- Report from the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership/Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Project: Characterizing Black Sea Bass Habitat in the Mid-Atlantic Bight
- Discuss Discard Mortality

3:45 – 4:45 p.m. **Tautog Management Board**

- Review Implementation Guidelines for the Commercial Harvest Tagging Program
- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Report

SUMMER MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued on page 7

Public Comment Guidelines

For issues that are not on the agenda, management boards will continue to provide opportunity to the public to bring matters of concern to the board's attention at the start of each board meeting. Board chairs will use a speaker sign-up list in deciding how to allocate the available time on the agenda (typically 10 minutes) to the number of people who want to speak.

For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include hearing one comment in favor and one in opposition until the chair is satisfied further comment will not provide additional insight to the board.

For agenda action items that have already gone out for public comment, it is the Policy Board's intent to end the occasional practice of allowing extensive and lengthy public comments. Currently, board chairs have the discretion to decide what public comment to allow in these circumstances.

In addition, the following timeline has been established for the submission of written comment for issues for which the Commission has NOT established a specific public comment period (i.e., in response to proposed management action).

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included in the briefing materials.

2. Comments received by 5 PM on Tuesday, July 30th will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.

3. Following the July 30th deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

The submitted comments must clearly indicate the commenter's expectation from the ASMFC staff regarding distribution. As with other public comment, it will be accepted via mail, fax, and email.

Employee of the Quarter: Mike Rinaldi

Mike Rinaldi, Fisheries Data Coordinator with the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Fisheries Statistics Program (ACCSP), was named Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2019. Mike first started at the Commission in May 2017 in a seasonal position to help with recreational data coordination and management as the ACCSP worked with the states to assume conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). From the outset, Mike's strong work ethic, diligence and dedication stood out and within six months he was promoted to Fisheries Data Assistant and later to his current position.

For the past several months, Mike has been working with ACCSP partners on implementing the new confidentiality application, an essential component of the ACCSP's Data Warehouse. As the lead staff member on confidentiality, he quickly familiarized himself with the application, database tables, and procedures. He good-naturedly piloted both the security contacts and end users through the new system. Despite the bugs, he supported the security contacts in such a way that, instead of complaining about the system, they complimented him on his efforts and patiently waited as issues were resolved. He demonstrated creativity and judgement by instituting personal processes to accommodate for the situation and ease the lives of users regardless of the extra work to himself. His work with the contractor exhibits outstanding technical knowledge and proficiency.

In addition to this project, he continued to effectively multi-task on other important tasks. Significant among these is his excellent work on the updates to the fish and shellfish common names within the ACCSP Data Warehouse. Due to his comprehensive review of the existing names and structured approach to the necessary standardization, multiple committees were easily able to absorb a great deal of information and approve the changes. The communication scheme he established has kept all partners and users informed and allowed time to incorporate changes from partners and implement updates across the ACCSP. This procedure will serve as a model for future communications with partners. Mike's dedication and knowledgeable approach have contributed substantially to the quality of ACCSP data and the program's interactions with its partners. In appreciation of his efforts, Mike received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on the plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Mike!

SUMMER MEETING PRELIMINARY AGENDA, continued from page 6

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8

8:30 – 11:30 a.m. **Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Consider Approval of Draft Addendum VI for Public Comment
- Consider Postponed Motions from April 2019:

Main Motion: Move to initiate an Amendment to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan to address the needed consideration for change on the issues of fishery goals and objectives, empirical/biological/spatial reference points, management triggers, rebuilding biomass, and area-specific management. Work on this Amendment will begin upon the completion of the previously discussed Addendum to the Management Plan.
Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark.

Motion to Amend: Move to amend to add reallocation of commercial quota between states.
Motion made by Mr. Pugh and seconded by Mr. Reid.

- Review and Consider Approval of 2019 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Lunch**

12:30 – 5:00 p.m. **NOAA Fisheries Wind Power Workshop for New England and Mid-Atlantic Commissioners**

Researchers Explore Use of eDNA to Survey River Herring

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU), with funding provided by the Commission and NOAA Fisheries, are exploring a new way to survey river herring (i.e., alewife and blueback herring) using Environmental DNA (eDNA).

The use of eDNA for biological research and monitoring is relatively new. eDNA is DNA collected from a variety of environmental samples such as soil, water, or even air, rather than directly sampled from an individual organism. As various organisms interact with the environment, DNA is expelled and accumulates in their surroundings. Example sources of eDNA include, but are not limited to, mucus, gametes, shed skin, feces, and carcasses.

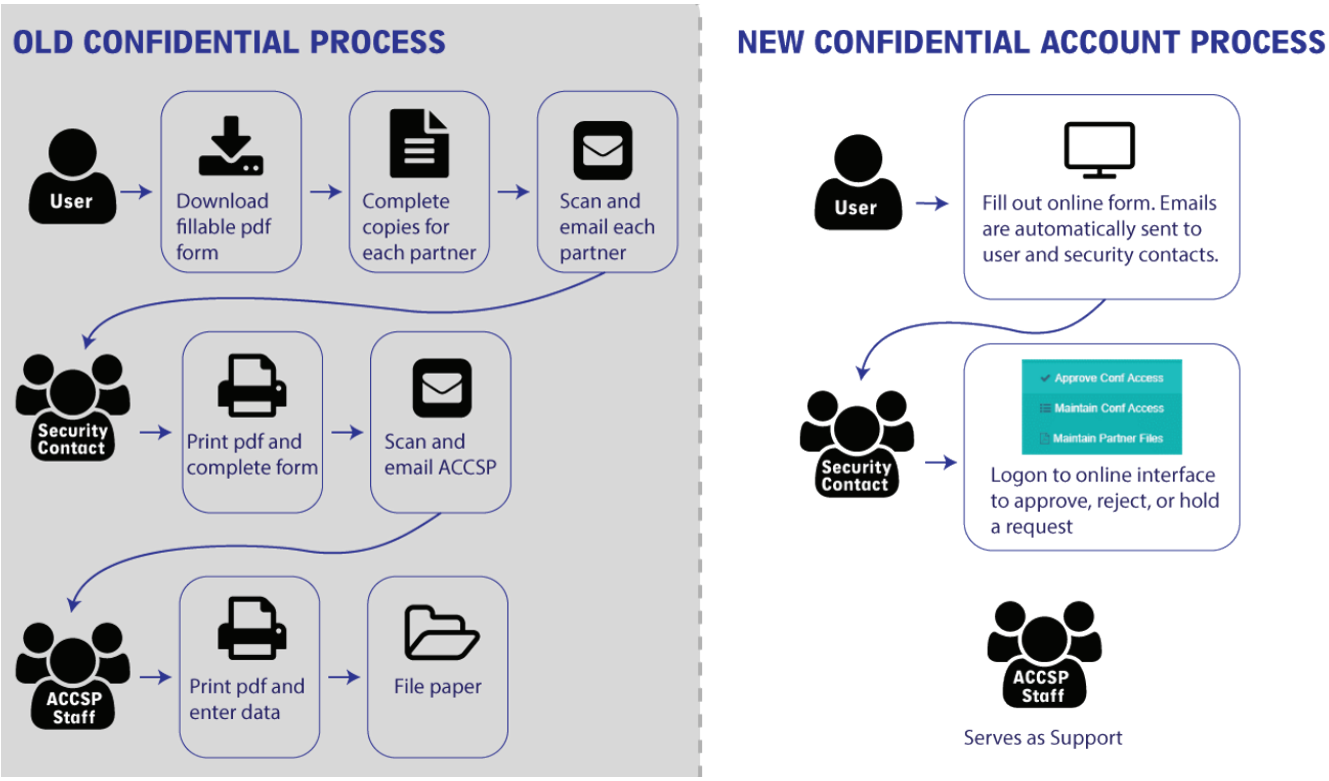
ECU Master's Student Seth Gibbons sampling at the Edenton Fish Hatchery (Edenton, NC).

Researchers Erin Field, Michael Brewer, and Roger Rulifson from ECU's Department of Biology have already completed a pilot study in North Carolina's Chowan River watershed, corroborating the presence of river herring eDNA with actual river herring presence using electrofishing. Recently, they conducted a study in collaboration with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in two Massachusetts watersheds (Mystic River and Monument River) to calibrate eDNA methodology with highly accurate fish counts. Hatchery fish studies to measure eDNA shedding and decay rates in collaboration with the USFWS Edenton Fish Hatchery (North Carolina) were also conducted to help develop a quantitative methodology using eDNA. These techniques were then applied to the Neuse River in North Carolina in collaboration with the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission. By comparing fish abundance using eDNA quantity and shedding rates with traditional fish counting, the researchers will assess the validity of the new method. The eDNA method can then be applied to other understudied watersheds in the Mid-Atlantic.

"Being able to rapidly monitor spawning habitats is essential for developing and monitoring conservation efforts, sustainability, and population growth." says Erin Field. "In Mid-Atlantic watersheds, traditional survey methods are more difficult due to high turbidity, large run sizes, and vast watersheds. The ability to provide information for previously unsurveyed areas will not only be useful for stock assessments, but will also help us better plan restoration and remediation efforts to bring back river herring."

For more information, please contact Erin Field, Assistant Professor with the ECU Department of Biology, at FIELDE14@ECU.EDU or visit http://www.efieldlab.com/research.html.

Migrating river herring. Photo (c) Greg Wells



The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Fisheries Statistics Program (ACCSP) has completed updates to its Confidential Fisheries Data Access application. The application represents one of the most integrated, modern, and easy-to-use account management systems for fishery-dependent data access. Instead of a lengthy process involving paper non-disclosure agreements and manual data entry, users and data security contacts are able to interact via multiple pages within the application.

Users can set up accounts, submit requests, or renew existing access with only a couple of clicks. They can view their existing confidential access and any pending requests. Contact information is auto-populated on the request page, thereby streamlining the process and removing the potential for error. Renewal options are limited to partners for whom the user's access expires within the year. This eliminates duplicative requests and reduces the burden on data security contacts.

Administrators have the ability to respond to requests, manage access to their data, and upload additional non-disclosure agreements or other email attachments. All of these actions are reliably archived within the ACCSP system, making review and audit significantly easier.

The Confidential Fisheries Data Access application is directly integrated within the ACCSP Data Warehouse. Once a user receives confidential access approval, it is immediately reflected in their ability to query partner data in the portal. The dynamic link between the confidential and report applications facilitates a fully electronic and efficient information management system for Atlantic coast fishery-dependent data.

WHAT ARE CONFIDENTIAL DATA?

Confidential data are data that can lead to the identification of individuals or individual contributions. Federal and state laws prohibit the disclosure of confidential data, and the ACCSP works diligently and tirelessly to protect proprietary information. The Program Partners of the ACCSP define confidential data using the 'rule of 3' for commercial catch and effort data. This rule requires that any publicly disclosed data summary must include contributions from three dealers, three fishermen, and three vessels to be considered non-confidential.

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

RIVER HERRING, continued from page 5

points for some rivers (see Table 1 on page 10). However, there are some positive signs of improvement for some river systems. Total mortality estimates for two rivers have fallen below region-specific reference points for 2013-2015, compared to zero mortality estimates below the reference points at the end of the 2012 stock assessment data time series. Of the 54 stocks for which data were available, 16 experienced increasing abundance, two experienced decreasing abundance, eight experienced stable abundance and ten experienced no discernable trend in abundance over the final ten years of the time series (2006-2015).

Atlantic Coastal Management

In 2009, in response to concerns regarding declining river herring populations, the Commission's Shad and River Herring Management Board approved Amendment 2 to the Interstate FMP. The Amendment has prohibited commercial and recreational fisheries in state waters since January 1, 2012 unless the state or jurisdiction implemented a Board-approved sustainable fishery management plan (SFMP). A sustainable fishery is defined as "a commercial and/or recreational fishery that will not diminish the potential future stock reproduction and recruitment." The plans must describe sustainability targets that are achieved to prevent closure of the fishery.

To date, SFMPs have been approved for Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina. Amendment 2 also requires states to implement fishery-dependent and -independent monitoring programs, and contains recommendations to member states and jurisdictions to conserve, restore, and protect critical river herring habitat.

Federal Action

In support of the sustainable management actions taken by the Commission, both the MAFMC and NEFMC took action regarding the incidental catch of river herring and American shad in federal waters (3-200 miles from shore). MAFMC implemented its first annual cap on incidental catch of river herring and shad in the U.S. Atlantic mackerel fishery in 2014. This catch cap was one of several protective measures implemented through Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. The Amendment also increased reporting and monitoring requirements for fishermen and dealers. MAFMC is currently developing 2020-2021 catch caps for the Atlantic mackerel fishery through Framework Adjustment 13 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish FMP. In 2014, NEFMC implemented annual river herring and shad catch caps through Framework 3 to Amendment 5 to the Atlantic Herring FMP. The catch cap applies to all trips landing more than the open access possession limit of 6,600 pounds of Atlantic herring. In June 2019, NEFMC maintained the current catch caps for 2020-2021.

Abundance Trends of Select Alewife and Blueback Herring Stocks along the Atlantic Coast
Source: 2017 River Herring Stock Assessment Update

State	River	Trends (2006-2015)
NE U.S. Continental Shelf (NMFS Bottom Trawl)^		Increasing[A,B]
ME	Androscoggin	Increasing[A]
	Kennebeck	Increasing[RH]
	Sebasticook	Increasing[RH]
	Damariscotta	Increasing[A]
	Union	No Trend[A]
NH	Cocheco	Increasing[A,B]
	Exeter	Stable[RH]
	Lamprey	Increasing[RH]
	Oyster	Decreasing[RH]
	Taylor	No Returns[RH]
	Winnicut	Unknown[A,B]
MA	Mattapoisett	Increasing[A]
	Monument	Increasing[A,B]
	Nemasket	Increasing[A]
	Parker	Stable[A]
	Stony Brook	Unknown[A]
RI	Buckeye	Increasing[A]
	Gilbert	Stable[A]
	Nonquit	Decrease[A]
CT	Bride Brook	Increasing[A]
	Connecticut	Stable[B]
	Farmington	Unknown[A,B]
	Mianus	No Trend[A], Increasing[B]
	Mill Brook	No Trend[A]
	Naugatuck	Unknown[A,B]
	Shetucket	No Trend[A], Stable[B]
NY	Hudson	Increasing[RH]
NJ, DE, PA	Delaware	No Trend[A,B]
MD, DE	Nanticoke	Stable[A], No Trend[B]
VA, MD, DC	Potomac	Stable[A], Unknown[B]
VA	James	Unknown[A,B]
	Rappahannock	No Trend[A], Increasing[B]
	York	Unknown[A,B]
NC	Alligator	Unknown[A,B]
	Chowan	No Trend[A], Stable[B]
	Scuppernog	Unknown[A,B]
SC	Santee-Cooper	No Trend[B]
FL	St. Johns River	Unknown[B]

^NE shelf trends are from the spring coastwide survey data which encounters river herring more frequently than the fall survey. A = Alewife only; B= Blueback herring only; A,B = Alewife and blueback herring by species; RH = alewife and blueback herring combined.

In June 2019, NOAA Fisheries published its status review of alewife and blueback herring stocks along the U.S. coast, which determined listing these species under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted at this time. The review noted that while river herring have declined from historical numbers and overutilization remains a risk for reduced populations, fisheries management efforts at the state and federal levels have helped to diminish the impacts of fishing mortality. For more information, please contact Caitlin Starks, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at cstarks@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Volume 28, Issue 2
April/May 2019

ASMFC

FISHERIES focus

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence

At its Spring Meeting, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented its Annual Awards of Excellence to an esteemed group of fishery and data managers, scientists, law enforcement officers and environmental attorneys for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast. Specifically, the award recipients are Robert Ballou for management and policy contributions; Geoffrey White, Coleby Wilt, Alex DiJohnson, Sarah Rains, Michael Celestino, and John Sweka for science and technical contributions; and Casey Oravetz, Sara Block, Banumathi Rangarajan, Lauren Steele, Shane Waller, Shennie Patel, and Joel La Bissonniere for law enforcement contributions.

"Every year, a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission's Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries," said ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. "I am humbled by the breadth and extent of accomplishments of this year's recipients and am grateful for their dedication to Atlantic coast fisheries."

From left: John Sweka, Alex DiJohnson, Mike Celestino, Sarah Rains, Geoff White, Shennie Patel, Casey Oravetz, Lauren Steele, Sara Block, ASMFC Executive Director Robert Beal, Bob Ballou, and ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore

Management & Policy Contributions

Mr. Robert Ballou, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

For nearly a decade, Mr. Robert Ballou has brought a wealth of knowledge and policy acumen to the Commission's fisheries management programs and elevated the decision-making of all species management boards that he has served on through his work ethic, strong leadership, and expertise. In

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE, continued on page 11

Upcoming Meetings

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as the deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

June 10 - 14
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hutchinson Island Marriott, 555 NE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, FL

June 11 - 13
New England Fishery Management Council, Doubletree by Hilton, So. Portland, ME

June 17 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)
Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Webinar; go here - http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/6/2019/striped-bass-technical-committee-conf-call/1401 - for more details

June 18 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)
Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Development Team Webinar; go here - http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/6/2019/striped-bass-plan-development-team/1399 - for more details

June 24 (begins at 9 AM) - 26 (ends at 5 PM)
Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Workshop II, Marriott Residence Inn-Raleigh Downtown, 616 South Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC

June 26 (begins at 9 AM) - 28 (ends at 4 PM)
Ecological Reference Points Stock Assessment Workshop II, Marriott Residence Inn-Raleigh Downtown, 616 South Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC

July 2 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)
Atlantic Striped Bass Plan Developmenet Team Webinar; go here - http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/Striped-Bass-Plan-Development-Team/1400 - for more details

July 8 (5 - 7 PM)
South Atlantic Species Advisory Panel Conference Call; go here - http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/south-atlantic-advisory-panel-conf-call/1403 - for more details

July 10 (9 AM - 12:30 PM)
Atlantic Striped Bass Technical Committee Webinar; go here - http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/7/2019/Striped-Bass-Technical-Committee-Conf-Call/1402 - for more details

August 6 - 8
ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin, 1800 South Eads Street, Arlington, VA

August 12 - 15
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown, 21 N. Juniper St., Philadelphia, PA

September 16 - 20
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC

September 24 - 26
New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport Hotel, Gloucester, MA

October 8 - 10
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Durham Convention Center, 301 W. Morgan Street, Durham, NC

ASMFC's Five-Year Strategic Plan Updates Vision and Addresses Need to Prioritize Limited Resources

On May 1st, during a typically busy Spring Meeting, Commissioners put their unanimous stamp of approval on the 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will guide our activities for the next five years and serve as the basis for annual action planning.

The keystone of the new Strategic Plan is an updated vision that emphasizes the cooperative nature of interstate fisheries management on the Atlantic coast: "Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries." The second major update to the Strategic Plan is a recognition that internal constraints, such as human and fiscal resource limitations, paired with outside forces like changing ocean conditions and ever-increasing political pressures, require us to focus on the most pressing issues. Now more than ever, the Commission and state agencies must dedicate staff time and resources where they are needed most and address less pressing issues only as resources allow.

In 2019, the highest priority species are American lobster, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic menhaden, summer flounder, black sea bass, Atlantic herring, cobia, horseshoe crab and red drum.

- **American lobster** priorities include adapting management in response to changing ocean conditions and protected species interactions; implementing reporting requirements, bait protocols, and offshore enforcement; and making progress on the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment.
- For **Atlantic striped bass**, we are currently responding to the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment, and will continue to work with NOAA Fisheries as it considers opening the EEZ for striped bass harvest.
- **Atlantic menhaden** priorities include completing menhaden-specific and ecological reference points-based benchmark stock assessments, setting 2020 specifications, and monitoring compliance of the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery harvest cap.
- This year, the Commission revised specifications for the 2019 **summer flounder** fishing season, set new specifications for 2020 and 2021, and jointly approved with the Mid-Atlantic Council the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment. The states will implement Addenda XXXI and XXXII, which address recreational conservation equivalency and specification setting.
- For **black sea bass**, managers will continue to explore new approaches to reform recreational management and reallocation strategies, integrate new MRIP estimates into management decisions, and set 2020-2022 specifications.
- In response to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment which showed reduced levels of **Atlantic herring** recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past five years, states will implement strengthened spawning protections in the inshore waters of the Gulf of Maine. The Herring Board will work with the New England Council as it considers establishing spawning protections in the offshore waters of Area 3.
- Transitioning **Atlantic cobia** to interstate management continues through the development of Amendment 1. The South Atlantic Board will also be working on a Benchmark Stock Assessment.
- The **Horseshoe Crab** Board approved the 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment in May and will consider a management response later this year, including specifications for horseshoe crabs of Delaware Bay origin. Other priorities include securing long-term funding for the benthic trawl survey and working with the biomedical community to increase transparency of assessment results.
- The South Atlantic Board is developing a roadmap for the next **red drum** benchmark stock assessment that includes calibrated MRIP data.

As time and resources permit, the care and feeding of the remaining 17 species management programs will continue. And certainly, as issues arise, any of these species can be shifted to high priority status.

The Strategic Plan's eight goals are:

1. Rebuild, maintain, fairly allocate, and promote sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries
2. Provide sound, actionable science to support informed management actions
3. Produce dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries
4. Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education
5. Promote compliance with fishery management plans to ensure sustainable use of Atlantic coast fisheries
6. Strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission
7. Advance Commission and member states' priorities through a proactive legislative policy agenda
8. Ensure the fiscal stability and efficient administration of the Commission

Goal 3, which focuses on the data collection and data management efforts of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP), was added to reflect the incorporation of ACCSP as a Commission program in 2017.

The 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan is available on the Commission website at http://www.asmfc.org/files/pub/2019-2023StrategicPlan_Final.pdf.

New Benchmark Stock Assessment Highlights Challenges in Sustainable Management

Introduction

Atlantic striped bass is regularly referred to as America's greatest game fish on the U.S. Atlantic coast. High demand for this species among fishermen and consumers, coupled with the complexity of its seasonal distribution along the coast, makes sustainable management of the Atlantic coast striped bass population complex and challenging. Stakeholders regularly call for the Commission to implement biologically, economically, and socially sound regulations within each jurisdiction and sector. As a result, the dynamic nature of Atlantic striped bass fishery management will likely continue for many years to come.

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board recently approved the 2018 benchmark stock assessment, which indicates the striped bass stock is now overfished and experiencing overfishing. While the stock remains in far better condition than it was in the 1980s, when the stock was collapsed and several states imposed moratoriums to recover the resource and fishery, the Commission is once again facing difficult decisions in striped bass management. Given striped bass' importance to both the coastal marine ecosystem and those who commercially and recreationally fish for it, the Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum to consider measures aimed at reducing fishing mortality to the target level.

Life History

On the Atlantic coast, Atlantic striped bass range from the St. Lawrence River in Canada to the St. John's River in Florida. The migratory stock under Commission management ranges from Maine through North Carolina.

Atlantic striped bass are an anadromous species spending most of their adult life in oceanic or estuarine waters, and can live up to 31 years old. Mature individuals migrate into freshwater rivers and tributaries in early spring to spawn, releasing millions of eggs into the ecosystem, and then return to the ocean. The fertilized eggs eventually hatch into larvae, which begin feeding on zooplankton. The larvae mature into juveniles and remain in coastal sounds and estuaries for two to four years before joining the coastal migratory population in the Atlantic Ocean.

The rivers that feed into the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware and Hudson Rivers are the major spawning grounds, with the Chesapeake Bay producing the majority of coastal migratory striped bass. In the ocean, striped bass tend to move north during the summer and south during the winter, but these migrations can be influenced by their age, sex, degree of maturity, and the river in which they were born. Important wintering grounds for the mixed stocks are located offshore from New Jersey to North Carolina.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

For centuries, Atlantic striped bass have supported valuable commercial and recreational fisheries on the Atlantic coast. Currently, commercial fisheries operate in eight Atlantic coastal jurisdictions, while recreational fisheries operate in 14. Commercial fishermen harvest Atlantic striped bass with a variety of gears including gillnets, pound nets, haul seines, trawls, and hook and line, while recreational fishermen use hook and line almost exclusively.

Increased fishing pressure in the 1970s coupled with degradation and loss of habitat led to stock collapse in the early 1980s. Commercial landings peaked in 1973 at almost 15 million pounds and then declined abruptly to 2.2 million pounds (271,958 fish) by 1983. During the mid-to-late 1980s, a number of states closed their Atlantic striped bass fisheries in order to initiate stock rebuilding. In the mid-1990s, the commercial fishery slowly grew again

Species Snapshot

Atlantic Striped Bass
Morone saxatilis

Species Range

St. Lawrence River in Canada to St. John's River in Florida

Interesting Facts

- Throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic, striped bass are also known as striper, rockfish, linesider, rollers, squidhound, or simply "bass."
- In 1669, the first public school in North America (MA) was financed with taxes imposed on striped bass harvest.
- In the 1880s, Atlantic striped bass were successfully transplanted to the Pacific Ocean, and a commercial fishery began in 1889. Commercial fishing was stopped in 1935 when the California coast striper was declared a game fish. The population continues to thrive.
- Atlantic striped bass is the most sought-after sportfish in the Chesapeake Bay, and is the official state fish of Maryland, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

Largest Recorded

- New world record was caught in CT (2011), weighing 81.88 lbs.
- Historic records confirm a 125 lb female caught off of NC in 1891.

Age at Maturity

- Females - 50% mature at age 6 (25-26"); 100% at age 9 (32")
- Males - 100% mature at age 3 (18")

Age at Recruitment into Fishery

- Chesapeake Bay Fishery = age 4 (19")
- Ocean Fishery = age 8 (28")

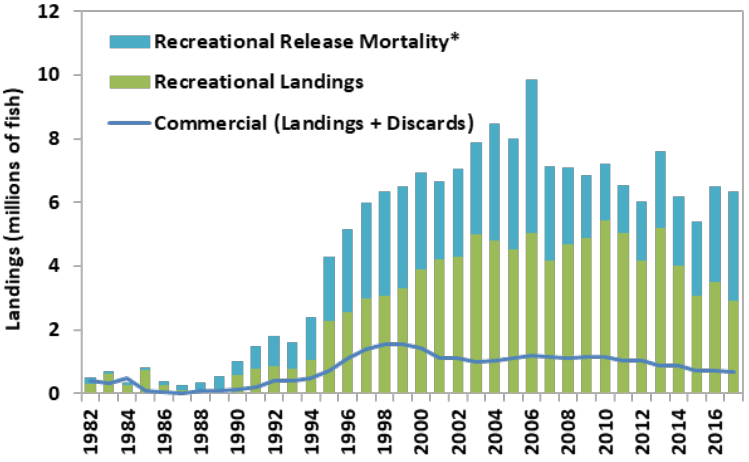
Stock Status

Overfished and experiencing overfishing

under a new management program (Amendment 4). Coastwide commercial landings rose from about 700,000 pounds (94,000 fish) in 1990 to 3.6 million pounds (540,000 fish) in 1995. Under Amendment 5, commercial striped bass harvest grew to 5.6 million pounds (921,000 fish) by 2002. Since the passage of Amendment 6, commercial harvest has been managed through a quota system, and landings averaged roughly 6.5 million pounds (943,000 fish) annually from 2004 to 2014. The commercial quota was reduced starting in 2015 through implementation of Addendum IV. Commercial landings are consistently dominated by Chesapeake Bay fisheries. Total commercial landings were estimated at 4.6 million pounds (592,576 fish) in 2017, of which approximately 56% (by weight) came from the Chesapeake Bay (77% in terms of numbers of fish).

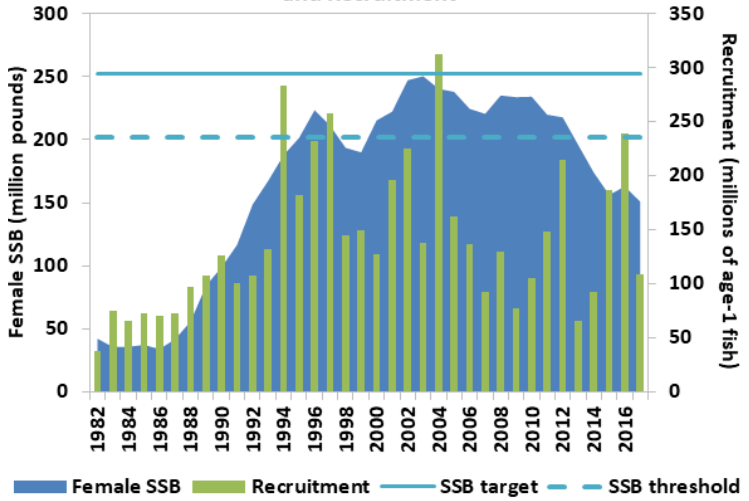
Between 1982 and 1989, recreational anglers landed an annual average of about 325,000 fish due to a combination of low stock abundance and stringent regulations. Under Amendment 4, recreational landings grew from 579,000 fish in 1990 to more than one million fish in 1994. The following year, with the declaration of restored stock status, recreational landings more than doubled to 2.3 million fish, and landings continued to increase to a record 5.4 million fish in 2010. From 2004 to 2014, recreational landings averaged 4.7 million fish annually. From 2015-2017, recreational anglers harvested an estimated 3.2 million fish annually, which can be attributed to implementation of more restrictive regulations via Addendum IV. Of those coastwide recreational landings, Maryland landed the largest proportion (37%) in 2017, followed by New Jersey (21%), New York (16%), Massachusetts (13%), and Virginia (4%). Anglers continue to release the vast majority of striped bass they catch, primarily due to regulation (meaning the fish is not of legal size or the angler has already landed the bag limit). Since implementation of Amendment 6 in 2003, anglers have released roughly 84% of fish caught each year (the proportion of fish caught and released in 2017 was 91%). The number of released fish peaked in 2006 at 53.5 million fish. Total numbers of releases have declined since then, averaging 26 million fish annually from 2007-2017. An estimated 38 million fish were caught and released in 2017.

Atlantic Striped Bass Commercial Landings and Discards & Recreational Landings and Release Mortality



*Recreational release mortality assumes that 9% of fish released alive die.

Atlantic Striped Bass Female Spawning Stock Biomass and Recruitment



Stock Status

On a regular basis, female spawning stock biomass (SSB) and fishing mortality rate (F) are estimated and compared to target and threshold levels (i.e., biological reference points) in order to assess the status of the stock. The 1995 estimate of female SSB is currently used as the SSB threshold because many stock characteristics, such as an expanded age structure, were reached by this year, and this is also the year the stock was declared recovered. The female SSB target is equal to 125% female SSB_{1995}. To estimate the associated F threshold and target, population projections were made by using a constant F and changing the value until the SSB threshold or target value was achieved. For the 2018 benchmark, the reference point values have been updated. The female SSB threshold was estimated at 91,436 mt (202 million pounds) with a female SSB target of 114,295 mt (252 million pounds). The F threshold was estimated at 0.24 and the F target was estimated at 0.20.

The 2018 benchmark stock assessment estimated female SSB in 2017 at 151 million pounds, which is below the SSB threshold, indicating the stock is overfished. Fishing mortality in 2017 was estimated at 0.31, which is above the F threshold, indicating the stock is experiencing overfishing. Please refer to the science highlight on page 12 for more information on the stock assessment.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Prior to passage of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act (Striped Bass Act, 1984), the precursor to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (1993), the Commission

continued, see ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS on page 8

Atlantic Herring

The Commission's Atlantic Herring Management Board approved Addendum II to Amendment 3 of the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The Addendum strengthens spawning protections in Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning (from approximately 25% to 20%), and extending the closure for a longer time (from four to six weeks). The Addendum also modifies the trigger level necessary to reclose the fishery, with the fishery reclosing when 20% or more of the sampled herring are mature but have not yet spawned. These changes to spawning protections are in response to the results of the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment, which showed reduced levels of recruitment and spawning stock biomass over the past five years, with 2016 recruitment levels the lowest on record.

Under Amendment 3, the Board uses a series of closures to protect spawning aggregations in the Gulf of Maine. Biological samples are used to annually project the start of the spawning closures. Recent analysis by the Atlantic Herring Technical Committee found that while the spawning closure system was significantly improved under Amendment 3, the protocol could continue to be strengthened by considering when, and for how long, a closure is initiated. Specifically, the analysis showed greater protection could be provided by initiating a closure when a lower percentage of the population is spawning and extending the closure for a longer time.

The states are required to implement Addendum II's measures by August 1, 2019. The Addendum is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cddb296Atl.HerringDraftAddendumIIFinalApprovedRevised.pdf. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org.

Coastal Sharks

The Commission's Coastal Sharks Management Board approved changes to the recreational size limit for Atlantic shortfin mako sharks in state waters, specifically, a 71-inch straight line fork length (FL) for males and an 83-inch straight line FL for females. These measures are consistent with those required for federal highly migratory species (HMS) permit holders under HMS Amendment 11, which was implemented in response to the 2017 Atlantic shortfin mako stock assessment that found the resource is overfished and experiencing overfishing. Amendment 11 responds to a recent determination by the International Commission on the Conservation Atlantic Tunas that all member countries need to reduce current shortfin mako landings by approximately 72-79% to prevent further declines in the population.

The Board adopted complementary size limits in state waters to provide consistency with federal measures as part of ongoing efforts to rebuild the resource. The states will implement the changes to the recreational minimum size limit for Atlantic shortfin mako by January 1, 2020.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootesmurdy@asmfc.org. Information on federal HMS shark regulations can be found at https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-highly-migratory-species-fishery-compliance-guides.

States Schedule Public Hearings on Atlantic Cobia Draft Amendment 1

The Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (Atlantic cobia) for public comment. Atlantic coastal states from Virginia through South Carolina have scheduled their hearings to gather public input on Draft Amendment 1. The details of those hearings follow.

VMRC - June 12 at 6 PM
380 Fenwick Rd, Building 96
Fort Monroe, Hampton, VA
Contact: Pat Geer at 757.247.2200

NC DMF - June 13 at 7 PM
Dare County Commissioners Office
954 Marshall Collins Drive, Room 168
Manteo, NC
Contact: Chris Batsavage at 252.808.8009

SC DNR - July 1 at 6 PM
Port Royal Sound Foundation Maritime Center, 310 Okatie Highway
Okatie, SC
Contacts: Mel Bell at 843.953.9007

****Webinar Hearing - June 18 at 6 PM***
Webinar Registration: https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/3902998396468814081
For audio, dial 1.888.585.9008 and enter the Conference Room Number: 275-479-282
Contact: Dr. Michael Schmidtke at 703.842.0740

*The webinar hearing is intended to primarily accommodate stakeholders in states where an in-person hearing is not being held. Stakeholders in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina are encouraged to provide comments at the in-person hearings in their respective states, rather than the webinar hearing.

Draft Amendment 1 was initiated in anticipation of removal of Atlantic cobia from the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils' Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (CMP FMP) through Regulatory Amendment 31. Final approval for CMP FMP Regulatory Amendment 31 was approved earlier this year. Therefore, there is no longer a federal management plan for Atlantic cobia, and the Commission

ATLANTIC COBIA, continued on next page

ATLANTIC COBIA, continued from page 6

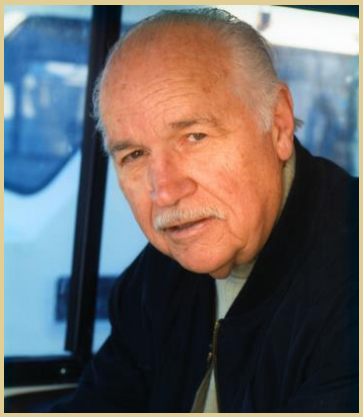
is the sole management body for this stock. This necessitates changes to several portions of the current interstate FMP that are dependent on the CMP FMP and also provides the opportunity for the Board to construct a long-term management strategy in the absence of a federal FMP.

Draft Amendment 1 presents options for addressing 13 issues within the FMP, including additions to the management goals and objectives, establishment of processes to define biological reference points and specify harvest, changes to commercial monitoring of landings, clarification of the process for evaluating recreational harvests against state harvest targets, potential changes to commercial fishery management measures, establishment of de minimis criteria for the commercial fishery, and recommended management measures for federal waters. For some of these issues, multiple options are presented, while for others, only one option is presented. Public input is requested for all issues included in Draft Amendment 1.

Draft Amendment 1 is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/CobiaDraftAmendment1_PublicComment_May2019.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under Public Input. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on Draft Amendment 1 either by attending state public hearings/webinar or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until ***5 PM (EST) on July 15, 2019*** and should be sent to Dr. Michael Schmidtke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Cobia Amd 1).

The Board will meet at the Commission's 2019 Summer Meeting in August to review and consider public comment and final approval for Draft Amendment 1.

In Memoriam



On June 1st, EDWARD AUGUSTINE O'BRIEN, 82, of Chesapeake Beach, MD, died peacefully at the Mandrin Chesapeake Inpatient Care Center in Harwood, MD, in the presence of his beloved partner, Diane Martin. A charter fishing captain, a life-long advocate for the Chesapeake Bay, a Marine who served his country with distinction, father of five, grandfather of nine, and great-grandfather of ten, he will be forever missed.

In March of this year, Governor Larry Hogan bestowed the highest honor to Captain O'Brien by naming him "Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay" for committing "his time and talents to improving the management of our natural resources and preserving our state's fishing heritage and the charter boat industry for over 40 years."

It was a recognition characteristic of Ed's lifelong service to his country, his family, and his community. After graduating from Loyola High School in Baltimore, Ed began his young life in the Marines in 1954 and was discharged as Sergeant in 1957 with honor. He advanced our country's security while working at McDonnell Aircraft as part of the Project Mercury Team. While with Martin Marietta, then Universal Match Corporation and as an officer of LaBarge Company, he continued to work with U.S. government agencies and Congress to enhance national security efforts. He also served as a Director of Control Video Corporation, the precursor to AOL.

In 1973, he started his charter fishing business with *Semper Fidelis I* on the Magothy River, *Semper Fidelis II* out of Solomon's Island, and *Semper Fidelis II* and III from Chesapeake Beach with his son Captain John O'Brien, until 2017. This is where he found pleasure, peace, and some of life's deepest meaning while watching sunshine glisten off the backs of striped bass breaking water in the early morning light on the Chesapeake.

In efforts to improve the health of the Bay and to preserve its fishing heritage, Ed hosted Governors, Congresspersons, members of the Maryland General Assembly, and President George W. Bush on the *Semper Fidelis*. He worked closely with the Coast Guard and received its highest civilian honor, the Meritorious Public Services Award. Since 1995, Ed served as Vice President of the National Charter Boat Association.

A long-time advocate for the restoration and conservation of striped bass, Ed served for over three decades on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Advisory Panel, representing the interests of Maryland anglers and the for-hire industry. For the past several years, he also served as Delegate Stein's ongoing proxy to the ASMFC.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Andrew by the Bay Catholic Church, 701 College Pkwy., Annapolis, MD on Wednesday, June 5. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Hospice of the Chesapeake, 90 Ritchie Hwy., Pasadena, MD 21122. Online condolences may be made at KalasFuneralHomes.com

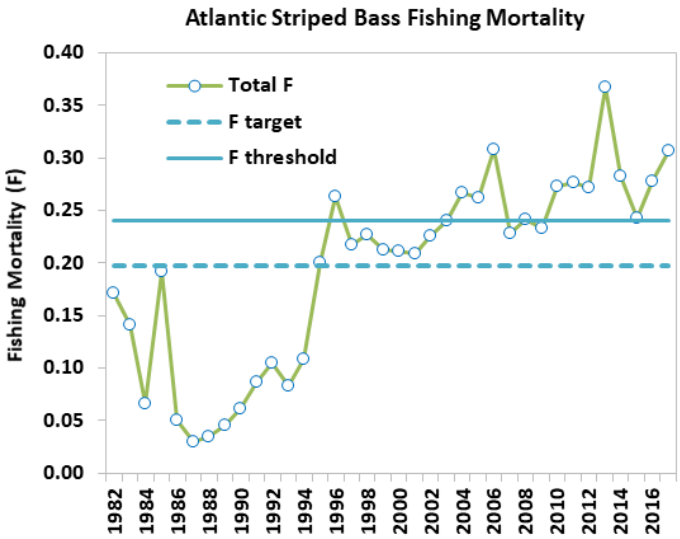
"O God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small."

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS continued from page 5

did not have the management authority that it does today. The Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass (1981) and Amendments 1 and 2 (1984) only provided recommendations on how to sustainably manage the resource. Amendment 3 (1985) was the first enforceable plan under the Striped Bass Act. The Amendment implemented measures to protect the 1982 year class, the first modestly-sized cohort for nearly a decade. Several states, beginning with Maryland, opted for an even more conservative approach and imposed a total moratorium on striped bass landings. The Amendment contained a trigger mechanism to reopen fisheries based on a juvenile abundance index, which was triggered with the recruitment of the 1989 year class. Subsequently, Amendment 4 (1989) was implemented and aimed to rebuild the resource rather than maximize yield. In 1995, the Commission declared Atlantic coastal striped bass stocks fully recovered.

Currently, striped bass is managed through Amendment 6 to the FMP (2003). The Amendment introduced a new set of biological reference points based on female SSB, and a suite of management triggers based on the biological reference points. The coastal commercial quota was restored to 100% of the historical average landings during the 1970s, and recreational fisheries were required to implement a two fish bag limit and a minimum size limit of 28 inches, except for the Chesapeake Bay fisheries, Albemarle-Roanoke (A/R) fisheries, and fisheries with approved conservation equivalency proposals. At the time, the Chesapeake Bay and A/R regulatory programs were different than the coastal migratory program because these portions of the stock were predicated on a more conservative F target than the coastal migratory stock. The independent F target allowed these jurisdictions to implement

Photo (c) Dennis Abbott



separate seasons, harvest caps, and size and bag limits as long as they remained under that target.

A series of four addenda to Amendment 6 were implemented from 2007 to 2014. Addendum I (2007) established a bycatch monitoring program to improve stock assessments, and Addendum II (2010) modified the definition of recruitment failure, a term defined in the FMP and associated with one of its management triggers. Addendum III (2012) addressed illegal striped bass harvest and was developed in response to a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation conducted within the Chesapeake Bay that uncovered over one million pounds of illegally harvested striped bass with an estimated net worth of $7 million. The Addendum required all states and jurisdictions with a commercial striped bass fishery to implement a commercial harvest tagging program whereby each commercially-caught striped bass is affixed with a unique tag that must remain on the fish until purchased by the consumer.

Addendum IV (2014) established one set of F reference points for the coastal migratory population in all management areas. Now, and as it was prior to Amendment 5, the Atlantic striped bass complex (excluding the A/R stock) is managed and modeled as a single stock with one set of SSB and F reference points for the coastal migratory population. Addendum IV was also initiated in response to a steady decline in SSB since 2004. In order to reduce F to a more sustainable level and stabilize SSB, the Addendum implemented regulations to achieve a 25% reduction in removals along the coast and 20.5% reduction in the Chesapeake Bay beginning in 2015. Specifically, commercial quotas were cut and coastal recreational bag limits were reduced from two fish to one. The recreational fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay, as well as several other state fisheries, used the FMP's conservation equivalency process, resulting in a wide range of regulations across the coast. Additionally, since the A/R stock was deemed by the Commission to contribute minimally to the coastal migratory population, Addendum IV defers management of the

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS, continued on next page

Comings & Goings

COMMISSIONERS

SENATOR PHILIP BOYLE

In April, Senator Philip Boyle stepped down as New York's Legislative Appointee to the Commission. Senator Boyle served in that position since 2013, where he consistently participated in the Commission's fisheries management process through either his own attendance or that of his proxy. We are grateful for Senator Boyle's involvement and wish him great success in all his future endeavors.

SENATOR TODD KAMINSKY

Appointed as New York's Legislative Appointee in April, Senator Todd Kaminsky is a Ranking Member of the State's Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, where he has been a champion for preserving and protecting Long Island's air, soil and water. A Long Island native, Senator Kaminsky has been a strong advocate for lower taxes, good jobs and a strong economy. He secured tax breaks for Sandy victims and has rallied to reform Industrial Development Agencies to protect tax dollars.

During his time as a prosecutor, Senator Kaminsky also worked vigorously as a community advocate for the South Shore. He organized free legal clinics for those affected by superstorm Sandy, and helped bring tens of thousands of dollars in relief funds to local residents. For his efforts, he was awarded the Community Service Award from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the Long Beach Martin Luther King Center's Sandy Relief Service Award. Senator Kaminsky championed the effort to reopen an emergency room on the Long Beach Barrier Island, succeeded in stopping National Grid from charging Sandy victims for gas connections when rebuilding their homes, and led the opposition to the Port Ambrose offshore Liquefied Natural Gas terminal.

Senator Kaminsky received his law degree, magna cum laude, from New York University, and his bachelor's degree, summa cum laude, from the University of Michigan. He and his wife, Ellen, live in Long Beach with their sons Rafe and Rory. Welcome aboard!

STAFF

MIKE CAHALL

Mike Cahall (center), with ASMFC Executive Director Bob Beal (left) and ASMFC Chair Jim Gilmore this May, having accepted a plaque in honor of his retirement.

In mid-May, Commission staff and the program partners of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program bid fond farewell to ACCSP Director Michael Cahall. Mike joined the ACCSP in 1999 to work on IT issues and programming, and was promoted to Director in 2007. Under his visionary leadership, ACCSP enjoyed tremedous growth, becoming the principal source of marine fishery statistics for the U.S. Atlantic coast that program partners had envisioned it to be when they created the ACCSP in the mid-1990s. Both innovative in his problem solving and deft at seeking funding, Mike was able to spearhead projects that significantly advanced

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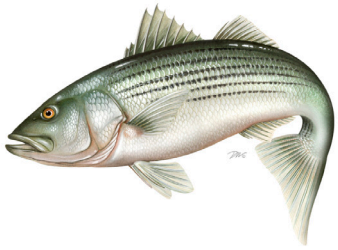
A/R stock to the State of North Carolina under the auspices of the Commission, with use of stock-specific biological reference points approved by the Board.

Given that the stock is exeriencing overfishing, the Board initiated the development of a Draft Addendum in May to consider measures aimed at reducing F to the target level. The Draft Addendum will explore a range of management options, including minimum size and slot size limits for the recreational fishery in the Chesapeake Bay and along the coast, as well as a coastwide circle hook requirement when fishing with bait. The Board also provided guidance on how to apply the necessary reductions to both the commercial and recreational sectors. The Draft Addendum will be presented to the Board for its consideration and approval for public comment in August. If approved, it will be released for public comment, with the Board considering its final approval in October for implementation in 2020.

Please visit www.asmfc.org for more information, or contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org.



Horseshoe Crab Board Approves Benchmark Stock Assessment for Management Use

The 2019 Horseshoe Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment evaluated the stock status of the resource by region, finding populations within the Delaware Bay and Southeast regions remaining consistently neutral and good, respectively, through time. The Northeast region population has changed from poor to neutral, while the status of the New York region population has trended downward from good, to neutral, and now to poor. The Benchmark Assessment was endorsed by the Peer Review Panel and accepted by the Horseshoe Crab Management Board (Board) for management use.

Number of Surveys Below the Index-based 1998 Reference Point in the Terminal (Final) Year of ARIMA Model

Region	2009 Benchmark	2013 Update	2019 Benchmark	2019 Stock Status
Northeast	2 out of 3	5 out of 6	1 out of 2	Neutral
New York	1 out of 5	3 out of 5	4 out of 4	Poor
Delaware Bay	5 out of 11	4 out of 11	2 out of 5	Neutral
Southeast	0 out of 5	0 out of 2	0 out of 2	Good
Coastwide	7 out of 24	12 out of 24	7 out of 13	Neutral

To date, no overfishing or overfished definitions have been adopted for management use. For the assessment, biological reference points were developed for the Delaware Bay region horseshoe crab population, although not endorsed by the Peer Review Panel for use in management. However, given the assessment results of low fishing mortality and relatively high abundance, overfishing and an overfished status are unlikely for female horseshoe crabs in the Delaware Bay region.

In the absence of biological reference points, stock status was based on the percentage of surveys within a region (or coastwide) having a >50% probability of the final year being below the model reference point (referred to as the Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average or ARIMA reference point). "Poor" status was >66% of surveys meeting this criterion, "Good" status was <33% of surveys, and "Neutral" status was 34 – 65% of surveys. Based on this criterion, stock status for the Northeast region was neutral; the New York region was poor; the Delaware Bay region was neutral; and the Southeast region was good.

Coastwide, abundance has fluctuated through time with many surveys decreasing after 1998 but increasing in recent years. The coastwide status includes surveys from all regions and indicates a neutral trend, likely due to positive and negative trends being combined.

The Board will consider a possible management response to the assessment at its next meeting in August. A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5ccae597HSC_StockAssessmentOverview2019.pdf. The 2019 Horseshoe Crab Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report is available at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cd5d6f1HSCAssessment_PeerReviewReport_May2019.pdf. For more information, please contact Dr. Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at mschmidtke@asmfc.org.

On the Legislative Front: *U.S. House Committee Advances Funding Bill for Fisheries Programs*

On May 22, the U.S. House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee approved its FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act by a vote of 30-22. The legislation provides funding to the Department of Commerce, NOAA Fisheries and some ASMFC programs, including the Atlantic Coastal Act and the ACCSP.

The Committee Report accompanying the legislation includes provisions to fund Interstate Fisheries Management Commissions at the FY19 level; continue the Mid-Atlantic Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey in FY20; and provide resources to study climate change impacts on American lobster. The Committee Report rejects the President's proposal to eliminate Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants, Joint Enforcement Agreements, and the National Sea Grant College Program.

The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee has yet to introduce its version of the FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in $ thousands)

	2019 Enacted	2020 President	2020 House
Protected Resources Science and Management			
Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles & Other Species	118,348	112,509	124,000
Species Recovery Grants	7,000	5,996	7,500
Atlantic Salmon	6,500	6,270	6,500
Pacific Salmon	65,000	61,741	66,420
Fisheries Science and Management			
Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services	147,107	135,593	150,000
Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments	168,086	157,656	171,000
Observers and Training	53,955	44,047	45,100
Fisheries Management Programs and Services	121,116	113,653	124,000
Aquaculture	15,000	13,005	13,005
Salmon Management Activities	37,000	31,598	37,000
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	40,175	37,653	41,500
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	3,365	0	3,500
Enforcement	69,796	54,072	73,500
Habitat Conservation and Restoration	56,384	37,875	61,625
Other Line Items of Note			
National Sea Grant College Program	68,000	0	73,000
Coastal Zone Management and Services	43,500	44,976	46,500
Coastal Zone Management Grants	75,500	0	81,000
National Estuarine Research Reserve System	27,000	0	29,000

increase from FY19 amount, decrease from FY19 amount, >10% change

From left: Part of the APAIS Team - Sarah Rains, Geoff White and Alex DiJohnson

particular, Mr. Ballou has shown outstanding leadership on two very high profile and consequential Commission management bodies – the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board and the Atlantic Menhaden Board. Over the past several years and in particular as Board Chair since 2017, Mr. Ballou has been responsible for much of the progress that has been made on summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass management. These species are particularly challenging given they are jointly managed with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and are highly influenced by changes in ocean temperatures. As Chair, Mr. Ballou has led the Board through difficult deliberations, leading to the adoption of multiple addenda, as well as approval of the Summer Flounder Commercial Issues Amendment.

Even more noteworthy is the role Mr. Ballou played in the development and approval of Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan. As Board Chair, Mr. Ballou worked tirelessly with Commission staff, Board members, and technical groups. There are few management actions higher in profile or more complex, and Mr. Ballou's commitment to the integrity of the Commission's process and the sustainable management of this important forage species deserves high commendation.

Science & Technical Contributions

Geoffrey White, Coleby Wilt, Alex DiJohnson and Sarah Rains, Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) Team

Due to the herculean efforts of the APAIS Team of Mr. Geoff White, Mr. Coleby Wilt, Mr. Alex DiJohnson and Ms. Sarah Rains over the past two years, the collection of recreational survey data successfully transitioned from a federal contractor to the state fishery agencies from Maine through Georgia. As part of the transition, the APAIS Team worked to shift the collection program from an outdated, paper-based system that included tens of thousands of paper interview forms to an automated system, whereby data is now collected via a tablet-based Dockside Interceptor. The Dockside Interceptor has reduced data transfer from 21 days to 1 day, completely eliminating all the paper steps.

The APAIS Team also assisted in the development and deployment of a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview tool to conduct the for-hire telephone survey, replacing a manual transcription process in the three states conducting the survey. The system was first deployed in North Carolina in January 2019, with the state estimating a 33% increase in efficiency and a better than 80% response rate.

These two innovative systems, spearheaded by the APAIS Team, are completely changing the complexion of recreational data collection on the Atlantic coast, resulting in more accurate and timely data with a significantly reduced workload.

Michael Celestino, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

For the past several years, Mr. Michael Celestino has made his mark as an active participant and chair for numerous Commission science committees. These include the Assessment Science Committee (ASC), the Ecological Reference Points Work Group, and the Science and Data Working Group of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, as well as species technical committees and stock assessment subcommittees for bluefish, striped bass and Atlantic sturgeon.

Mr. Celestino's leadership on the 2018 striped bass benchmark stock assessment is of particular note. Midway through the assessment process, Mr. Celestino stepped in as Stock Assessment Subcommittee Chair, skillfully guiding the Subcommittee through the challenges of dealing with newly revised recreational data and new modeling approaches. He was responsible for updating the statistical catch-at-age model with new and improved data and conducting sensitivity analyses, all the while supporting the primary model being developed by another modeler. Ultimately, the model Mr. Celestino spearheaded was accepted as the preferred model by the peer review panel, adding lead modeler to his already long list of accomplishments. With the assessment process completed, Mr. Celestino continues to contribute to the striped bass stock assessment by running projections and responding to Board tasks.

In all that he does, Mr. Celestino exhibits an outstanding work ethic, consistently producing high-quality and meticulous work in a timely fashion. Committed to the Commission's mission and the process of cooperative management, Mr. Celestino analyzes problems carefully from all angles and provides a comprehensive viewpoint of the issues. While it is still early in his career, Mr. Celestino's leadership and efforts of the past several years have made him a huge asset to the Commission's committees and management process.

Dr. John Sweka, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Northeast Fishery Center

For more than a decade, Dr. John Sweka has been an invaluable member and chair of several Commission science committees, including the ASC and stock assessment subcommittees for American eel, Atlantic sturgeon, river herring and horseshoe crab. Dr. Sweka served as Chair of the River Herring Stock Assessment Committee, leading the charge in the first coastwide stock assessment of river herring, and he currently chairs the Horseshoe

ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE, continued on page 15

Science Highlight: Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Overview

This overview presents a summary of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment for Atlantic striped bass. The assessment is the latest and best information available on the status of the coastwide Atlantic striped bass stock for use in fisheries management.

What Data Were Used?

The stock assessment used both ***fishery-dependent and -independent data*** collected through state, federal, and academic research programs. The assessment included final catch data through 2017.

Recreational and Commercial Catch

The stock assessment used total catch (harvest, commercial discards and dead recreational discards) and catch-at-age split into two components: Chesapeake Bay removals and ocean removals. Removals include harvest and dead discards from both fishing sectors. Ocean removals include removals from inland areas like the Delaware Bay, Long Island Sound and the Hudson River.

Strict commercial quota monitoring is conducted by states through various state and federal dealer and fishermen reporting systems; landings are compiled annually from those sources by state biologists.

Recreational catch, effort, and length frequency data were obtained from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) for 1982-2017. MRIP uses surveys to estimate how many fishing trips recreational anglers take every year and how many fish per trip they catch. In 2018, MRIP transitioned from a phone-based survey to a mail-based survey to estimate the number of angler trips. The new, improved survey showed the number of trips taken in recent years was much higher than had been previously estimated, and as a result, estimates of recreational catch were much higher for striped bass (see Figure 1). Overall, the estimates of recreational removals of striped bass (fish that were landed plus fish that died as a result of being released alive) were 2.3 times higher using the new method, with a greater difference in recent years.

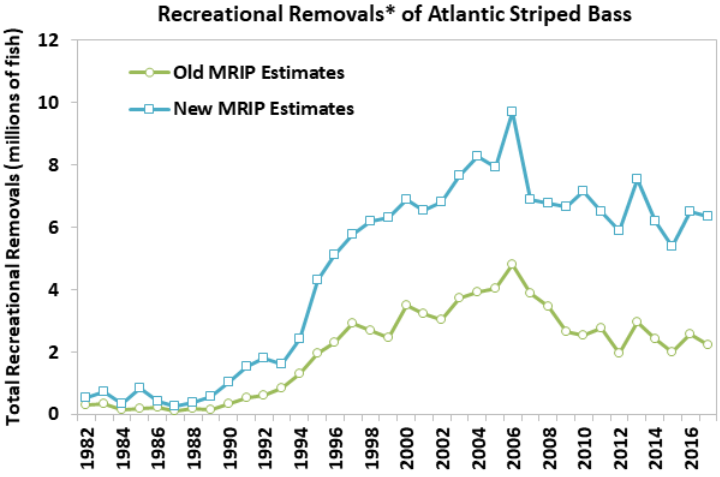
MRIP catch per unit effort data was used as a fishery-dependent index of relative abundance.

Fishery-Independent Surveys & Tagging Data

The assessment used nearly a dozen fishery-independent indices of relative abundance for adults, young-of-year and age-1 fish.

Eight tagging programs have traditionally participated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Atlantic coast striped bass tagging program and each have been in progress for at least 18 years. The tagging programs are divided into two categories, producer area programs and coastal programs. Producer area tagging programs primarily operate during spring spawning on spawning grounds in New York, Delaware/Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Coastal programs tag striped bass from mixed stocks during fall, winter, or early spring in waters off of Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina. USFWS maintains the tag release and recapture database and provides rewards to fishermen who report the recaptures of tagged fish. From 1985 through August 2018, there were 542,149 striped bass tagged and released, with 92,344 recaptures reported coastwide.

Figure 1. Comparison of Old & New MRIP Estimates of Recreational Removals* of Atlantic Striped Bass



*Recreational removals include landed fish and the 9% of fish released alive that die.

How Were the Data Analyzed?

Statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model

The accepted model for use in striped bass stock assessments is a forward projecting statistical catch-at-age (SCA) model, which uses catch-at-age data and fishery-dependent and -independent survey indices to estimate annual population size and fishing mortality. Indices of abundance track relative changes in the population over time while catch data provide information on the scale of the population size. Age structure data (numbers of fish by age) provide additional information on recruitment (number of age-1 fish entering the population) and trends in mortality.

Tagging model

As a complement to the SCA model, a tagging model (IRCR) was run on data from the USFWS coastwide striped bass tagging program through the 2017 tagging year. The IRCR model compares the numbers of tagged fish that have been recaptured to the numbers of fish that were originally tagged over time to estimate the survival rate of striped bass from year-to-year, fishing mortality rates and natural mortality rates.

What is the Status of the Stock?

In 2017, the Atlantic striped bass stock was overfished and experiencing overfishing relative to the updated reference points defined in the 2018 assessment. Female spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated at 151 million pounds, below the SSB threshold of 202 million pounds. Total fishing mortality was estimated at 0.307, above the fishing mortality threshold of 0.240.

Despite recent declines in SSB, the stock is still above the SSB levels observed during the moratorium that was in place in the mid-late 1980s.

Recruitment

As shown in the lower figure on page 5, striped bass experienced

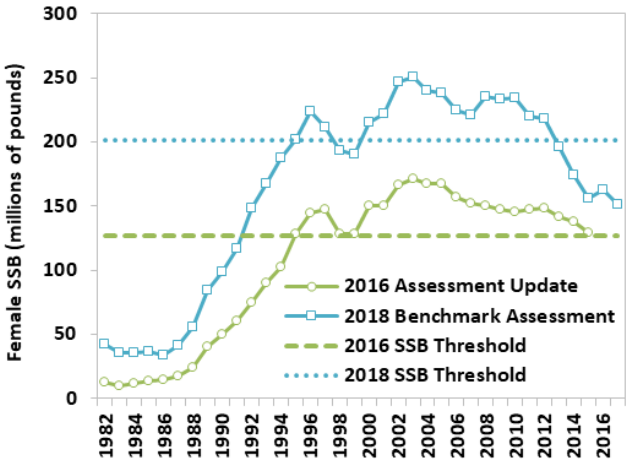
a period of strong recruitment (age-1 fish entering the population) from 1994-2004, followed by a period of lower recruitment from 2005-2011 (although not as low as the early 1980s, when the stock was considered collapsed). This period of low recruitment contributed to the decline in SSB that the stock has experienced since 2010. Recruitment of age-1 fish was high in 2012, 2015, and 2016 (corresponding to strong 2011, 2014, and 2015 year classes), but estimates of age-1 striped bass were below the long-term average in 2013, 2014, and 2017. Recruitment in 2017 was estimated at 108.8 million age-1 fish, below the time series average of 140.9 million fish.

Biological Reference Points

The reference points currently used for management are based on the estimate of female SSB in 1995, the year the stock was declared recovered, as well as the fishing mortality needed to maintain SSB at its threshold and target values.

For the 2018 assessment, the definitions of the targets and thresholds remain the same, but the values have been updated. The new MRIP estimates resulted in higher estimates of SSB and, therefore, higher estimates for the SSB threshold and target (Figure 2). The SSB threshold was estimated at 202 million pounds, with an SSB target of 252 million pounds. The new MRIP estimates did not have a large effect on the estimates of fishing mortality, and the updated fishing mortality threshold and target values are

Figure 2. Comparison of SSB Estimates from the 2016 Update Using Old MRIP Numbers and the 2018 Benchmark Using New MRIP Numbers



very similar to the previous fishing mortality reference points. The fishing mortality threshold was estimated at 0.24, and the target was estimated at 0.20.

Data and Research Priorities

The Technical Committee (TC) addressed several of the recommendations from the 2013 benchmark assessment report, including developing new maturity-at-age estimates for the coastal migratory stock and evaluating stock status definitions relative to uncertainty in biological reference points. The TC also made progress on developing a spatially and temporally explicit catch-at-age model incorporating tag-based movement information. Although the Peer Review Panel did not accept the migration model for management use, it recommended continued work to improve the model for future assessments.

The TC identified several high priority research recommendations to improve the assessment. These included better characterization of commercial discards; expanded collection of sex ratio data and paired scale-otolith samples; development of an index of relative abundance for the Hudson River stock; better estimates of tag reporting rates; continued collection of mark-recapture data to better understand migration dynamics; and additional work on the impacts of Mycobacteriosis on striped bass population dynamics and productivity.

The TC recommends the next benchmark stock assessment be conducted in 2024, which will allow time to work on issues like state-specific scale-otolith conversion factors and directly incorporating tagging data into the two-stock assessment model.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission's website at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5cc9ba4eAtlStripedBassStockAssessmentOverview.pdf. The 2018 Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment, Stock Assessment Summary and Peer Review Report can be obtained via the following links:

Full assessment report - https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1908/crd1908.pdf
Summary Report - https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/publications/crd/crd1901/crd1901.pdf
Peer Review Report - https://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/saw66/saw-66-summary-report.pdf

From left: ISFMP Director Toni Kerns and former FMP Coordinator Kate Taylor with a striper caught as part of the hook and line tagging survey. Photo (c) Tom Crews, USFWS

ACCSP Announces FY19 Funding Recipients

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) is pleased to announce the recipients of its FY19 funding awards. Thanks to NOAA Fisheries, ACCSP is able to fund 13 new and ongoing projects submitted by our state and federal partners to improve fisheries data collection and processing on the Atlantic coast. This year's awards total over $1.6 million.

Partner	Project Title	Approximate Funding
ME DMR	Managing Mandatory Dealer Reporting in Maine	$214,000
ME DMR	Portside Commercial Catch Sampling and Comparative Bycatch Sampling for Atlantic Herring, Atlantic Mackerel, and Atlantic Menhaden Fisheries	$25,500
RI DEM	Maintenance and Coordination of Fisheries Dependent Data Feeds to ACCSP from the State of Rhode Island	$77,000
RI DEM	Advancing Fishery Dependent Data Collection for Black Sea Bass in the Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic Region Utilizing Modern Technology and a Vessel Research Fleet Approach	$133,000
NJ DFW	Electronic Reporting and Biological Characterization of New Jersey Commercial Fisheries	$164,400
SC DNR	ACCSP Data Reporting from South Carolina's Commercial Fisheries	$168,900
ACCSP Recreational Technical Committee	Supplemental At-Sea Sampling for the Recreational Headboat Fishery on the Atlantic Coast	$107,100
SEFSC	Continued Processing and Aging of Biological Samples Collected from U.S. South Atlantic Commercial and Recreational Fisheries	$300,000
NC DMF	An Updated Economic and Social Analysis of the Commercial Seafood Dealers of North Carolina	$19,900
ME DMR & MA DMF	Collaborative Electronic Tracking Pilot Program in the American Lobster Fishery	$19,700
MD DNR	Expanding Accountability in Reporting: A Tool for Comprehensive For-Hire Data Collection and Monitoring in Maryland	$182,900
RI DMF & GA DNR	Development of a Mobile Application to Assist Maritime Law Enforcement Personnel with Fisheries Enforcement Tasks	$60,000

ACCSP Issues Request for FY20 Proposals

The ACCSP is issuing a Request for Proposals to Program Partners and Committees for FY20 funding. ACCSP's Funding Decision Document (FDD) provides an overview of the funding decision process, guidance for preparing and submitting proposals, and information on funding recipients' post-award responsibilities. Projects in areas not specifically addressed in the FDD may still be considered for funding if they help achieve Program goals. These goals, listed by priority, are improvements in:

1 a. Catch, effort, and landings data (including licensing, permit and vessel registration data);
1 b. Biological data (equal to 1a.);
2. Releases, discards and protected species data; and,
3. Economic and sociological data.

Project activities that will be considered according to priority may include:

- Partner implementation of data collection programs;
- Continuation of current Program-funded partner programs;
- Funding for personnel required to implement Program-related projects/proposals; and
- Data management system upgrades or establishment of partner data feeds to the Data Warehouse and/or Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System.

Initial proposals are due ***June 10, 2019***. Full information can be found at https://www.accsp.org/what-we-do/partner-project-funding

ACCSP
Good Data, Good Decisions

ACCSP is a cooperative state-federal program focused on the design, implementation, and conduct of marine fisheries statistics data collection programs and the integration of those data into a single data management system that will meet the needs of fishery managers, scientists, and fishermen. It is composed of representatives from natural resource management agencies coastwide, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the three Atlantic fishery management councils, the 15 Atlantic states, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, the D.C. Fisheries and Wildlife Division, NOAA Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For further information please visit www.accsp.org.

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From left: Mike Celestino and John Sweka

Crab Stock Assessment Subcommittee and the ASC. For Atlantic sturgeon, Dr. Sweka has made substantial advances in field research, such as hydroacoustic and telemetry tagging studies, which were used in the 2017 sturgeon stock assessment.

Dr. Sweka also acts as a key liaison to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in order to advance the Commission's scientific endeavors, most notably our understanding and management of horseshoe crab and American eel populations. In collaboration with Mr. Dave Smith at the USGS Leetown Science Center, Dr. Sweka was a key contributor in the development of the Adaptive Resource Management framework to balance horseshoe crab harvest policies with the protection of endangered and threatened shorebird populations. He is also working with USGS and the Eel Technical Committee to incorporate habitat variables in a GIS mapping framework for future stock assessments.

Dr. Sweka has exhibited innovation and creativity by introducing new models for stock assessments. He has run ARIMA models for multiple species, which are currently used to evaluate abundance relative to reference points for American eel, river herring, and horseshoe crab. Dr. Sweka also developed a new age-structured operational model for horseshoe crabs as part of the stock assessment completed this spring. The peer review panel found the models to be notable improvements to the assessment process.

Finally, Dr. Sweka is recognized by fellow committee members, Commission staff, and USFWS as a respected and reliable scientific colleague. Federal fisheries agencies have a mandate to provide scientific support to the Commission and John has answered the bell. At a time when demands on our scientific community can be overwhelming, John consistently delivers analytical work on time and at a very high standard.

Law Enforcement Contributions

NOAA Special Agents Casey Oravetz and Sara Block, Assistant US Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina Banumathi Rangarajan, and the US Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section Trial Attorneys Lauren Steele, Shane Waller, Shennie Patel, and Joel La Bissonniere

Due to the diligence and tenacity of the team of NOAA Special Agents and attorneys with the Eastern District of North Carolina, and the U.S. Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Crimes Section, 13 North Carolina trawl captains were indicted for the illegal harvest and possession of hundreds of thousands of pounds of striped bass from the EEZ in 2009 and 2010. The investigation began from a tip to NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and a subsequent U.S. Coast Guard at-sea boarding of the F/V LADY SAMAIRA. The captain provided false information to officers regarding where fishing had occurred, and NOAA conducted a dockside investigation wherein the vessel's navigation computer was seized. Forensic analysis determined the captain caught striped bass illegally from the EEZ on that date and on previous trips, and had deleted evidence on the computer to attempt to conceal this activity. NOAA OLE agents recovered the data and reconstructed the trips using GIS tools. A broader analysis was then performed on other vessels landing striped bass on the same fishing days. Over a period of two years, NOAA OLE conducted over 30 search warrants in four states on vessels and businesses in order to gather evidence. Legal challenges made by the defense counsel resulted in the District Court erroneously dismissing the indictments. The U.S. Department of Justice appealed the case to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, who ultimately reversed the decision and reinstated the indictments.

Twelve defendants ultimately pled guilty to violating the Lacey Act. Some additionally pled to false statements, obstruction of justice, tax evasion, and failure to file tax returns. One of the defendants passed away during the investigation. For the 12 defendants, the U.S. District Court Judge imposed sentences totaling over 38 years of probation, 2.5 years of home confinement, 850 hours of community service, $3,000 in fines, and over $1.2 million in restitution.

This team's tenacity, hard work, and commitment to the mission showcase the outstanding work performed as a team to protect and conserve the Atlantic striped bass fishery.

From left: Shennie Patel, Casey Oravetz, Lauren Steele, and Sara Block

ASMFC Seeks New ACCSP Director

The Commission seeks a dynamic and visionary leader to manage and further develop the integrated fisheries statistics programs that include the collection, warehousing and dissemination of commercial and recreational harvest data for the U.S. Atlantic coast. The applicant should have strong skills and experience as a program/project manager. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Director will be responsible for: 1) articulating, advocating for and promoting the vision and mission of ACCSP to a wide range of participants and stakeholders; 2) developing and updating annual operating plans that appropriately reflect the strategic plan, availability of funds and policy guidance from the ACCSP Coordinating Council; 3) providing executive leadership for the program; 4) providing overall programmatic management; and, 5) supervising the day-to-day operations of the Program. The Director will supervise a staff of 13 and work closely with the Chair of the ACCSP Coordinating Council and the Commission's Executive Director on Program policy and administrative issues. ACCSP is a partner-driven program of the ASMFC.

Applications will be accepted until **June 17**. The full job announcement can be found at http://www.asmfc.org/files/JobAnnouncements/19-005_ACCSPDirector_May2019.pdf

Species	FMP Coordinator	Stock Assessment Scientist	ACCSP Data Lead
American Eel	Kirby Rootes-Murdy krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
American Lobster & Jonah Crab	Caitlin Starks cstarks@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Julie Defilippi Simpson julie.simpson@accsp.org
Atlantic Croaker	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Atlantic Herring	Kirby Rootes-Murdy krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org
Atlantic Menhaden	Max Appelman, mappelman@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Julie Defilippi Simpson julie.simpson@accsp.org
Atlantic Striped Bass	Max Appelman, mappelman@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org
Atlantic Sturgeon	Max Appelman, mappelman@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org
Black Drum	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Black Sea Bass	Caitlin Starks cstarks@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Bluefish	Dustin Colson Leaning DLeaning@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org
Coastal Sharks	Kirby Rootes-Murdy krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org
Cobia	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Horseshoe Crab	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Northern Shrimp	Dustin Colson Leaning DLeaning@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Red Drum	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Shad & River Herring	Caitlin Starks cstarks@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Spanish Mackerel	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Spiny Dogfish	Kirby Rootes-Murdy krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	Kristen Anstead kanstead@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Spot	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Spotted Seatrout	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Heather Konell heather.konell@accsp.org
Summer Flounder & Scup	Dustin Colson Leaning DLeaning@asmfc.org	Jeff Kipp jkipp@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Tautog	Kirby Rootes-Murdy krootes-murdy@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Weakfish	Mike Schmidtke mschmidtke@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Mike Rinaldi mike.rinaldi@accsp.org
Winter Flounder	Dustin Colson Leaning DLeaning@asmfc.org	Katie Drew kdrew@asmfc.org	Joe Myers joseph.myers@accsp.org

COMINGS AND GOINGS
continued from page 9

ACCSP's mission and objectives, including tablet and mobile data entry apps for dealers, commercial fishermen and the for-hire industry. Not one to rest on his laurels, Mike will be filling his retirement with a multitude of other pursuits, such as working as an EMT, teaching and performing the violin, and creating a database to aid in mapping the ancient ruins of Pompeii. We wish Mike all the very best.

DUSTIN COLSON LEANING

On June 3rd, Commission staff welcomed Dustin Colson Leaning as its newest Fishery Management Plan Coordinator. Dustin is a recent graduate from Duke University with a Master's in Environmental Economics and Policy. He completed his undergraduate degree from Eckerd College. While at Duke, he examined the effects of community conservation engagement on bush meat hunting in Gabon. Dustin assumes coordination responsibility for summer flounder, scup, bluefish, winter flounder and Northern shrimp. Please join us in welcoming Dustin to the Commission. (See accompanying table for current fisheries management, science and data leads and their contact information.)

ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY
Director

August 7, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Chris Batsavage, Special Assistant for Councils

SUBJECT: Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting Summary—Jun. 4-6, 2019

Issue
Memo to inform the Marine Fisheries Commission of the issues discussed and actions taken by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Findings
- The memo highlights management actions of particular interest to the Marine Fisheries Commission.
- Additional information about the meeting can be found in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting materials in the briefing book.

Action Needed
For informational purposes only, no action is needed at this time.

Overview

2020 Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Specifications
The Council reviewed Atlantic mackerel, squid (longfin and *Illex*), and butterfish specifications for 2020, which were previously established as part of multi-year specifications. The Council did not recommend any changes to the squid and butterfish specifications. However, the Council recommended an Atlantic mackerel catch limit of 29,184 metric tons, which is a 10 percent reduction from the previously recommended catch limit for 2020. The reduction is based on information that indicates poor recruitment* in recent years and only one dominant year class in the population*. This information also resulted in Canada reducing the Atlantic mackerel catch limit in their waters. The Atlantic mackerel stock* is currently overfished and overfishing* is occurring. A stock assessment update is scheduled for 2020.

River Herring and Shad Catch Cap
The Council took no action on modifying the 2019 river herring and shad catch cap for the directed Atlantic mackerel fishery and will revisit the 2020 catch cap at their August meeting. The catch cap is 129 metric tons in 2019 and 152 metric tons in 2020. To ensure fishermen avoid river herring and shad while fishing for Atlantic mackerel, the cap is initially set at 89

metric tons while Atlantic mackerel landings are below 10,000 metric tons. The cap will only increase if the fishery lands greater than10,000 metric tons of Atlantic mackerel before the 89 metric ton cap is reached. The 2019 river herring and shad catch cap was reached on March 12, which closed the directed Atlantic mackerel fishery when only a small portion of the 2019 quota was landed.

Upcoming Meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is on August 13-15, 2019 at the Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown in Philadelphia, PA.

*Definitions

Stock – A group of fish of the same species in a given area. Unlike a fish population, a stock is defined as much by management concerns (jurisdictional boundaries or harvesting locations) as by biology.
Fishery Dependent – Data derived from the commercial and recreational fisheries and dealers; including catch, landings, and effort information.
Fishery Independent – Data derived from activities such as research and surveys that does not involve the commercial or recreational harvest of fish.
Terminal Year – The final year of estimates being used in an analysis.
Overfishing – Occurs when the rate that fish that are harvested or killed exceeds a specific threshold.
Spawning Stock Biomass – Total weight of mature females in the stock.
Recruitment – The number of fish that survive to the juvenile stage.
Fishing Mortality – Rate at which fish are removed from the population.

June 2019 Council Meeting Summary

June 4-6, 2019

New York, NY

The following summary highlights actions taken and issues considered at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's June 2019 meeting in New York, NY. Presentations, briefing materials, and webinar recordings are available at: http://www.mafmc.org/briefing/june-2019.

Atlantic Surfclam and Ocean Quahog

2020 Specifications Review

The surfclam and ocean quahog (SCOQ) fisheries are approaching the third year of multi-year specifications previously set for the 2018-2020 fishing years. The Council reviewed updated catch and landings information for both stocks, as well as recommendations from staff, the surfclam and ocean quahog AP, and the SSC, and determined that no changes to 2020 measures are warranted. To maintain the current measures, the Council also voted to recommend suspending the minimum shell length for surfclams in 2020. These specifications are described in detail in the final rule published February 6, 2018: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/02/06/2018-02321/fisheries-of-the-northeasternunited-states-atlantic-surfclam-and-ocean-quahog-fishery-2018-2020

Catch Share Program Review

Council staff presented a summary of public comments received on the Review of the SCOQ Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) Program. This report was structured around NMFS Procedural Instruction 01-121-01, Guidance for Conducting Review of Catch Share Programs, and constitutes the first program review for the first Limited Access Privilege Program developed in the country. After reviewing public comments, the Council voted to submit the SCOQ ITQ Program Review package to NMFS. In addition, the Council tasked staff to work with NOAA Fisheries to further develop potential actions identified as part of the review for consideration in the Council's 2020 implementation plan. The full report is available at http://www.mafmc.org/s/SCOQ-ITQ-Program-Review-Final-20190517.pdf.

Excessive Shares Amendment

The Council reviewed the Draft Public Hearing Document for the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog Excessive Shares Amendment and considered recommendations from the SCOQ Committee. Although there was some discussion of removing Alternatives 5 and 6 from the document, the Council ultimately voted to approve the public hearing document for public hearings without modification. The Council is planning to hold four public hearings for this action during a 45-day comment period beginning August 1, 2019. Public hearing dates and locations will be posted on the Council's Website. Additional information about this action can be found at http://www.mafmc.org/actions/scoq-excessive-shares-amendment.

Atlantic Surfclam Research for Great South Channel Habitat Management Area

Ms. Michelle Bachman (New England Council staff) provided an update to the Mid-Atlantic Council about recent activities by the New England Council to develop research objectives for the Great South Channel Habitat Management Area.

SSC Overfishing Limit (OFL) Coefficient of Variation (CV) Guidelines

Dr. Tom Miller (SSC Vice-Chairman) presented an overview of the guidelines and process the SSC will use when assigning a coefficient of variation (CV) value to estimates of the overfishing limit (OFL) when the SSC makes

acceptable biological catch (ABC) recommendations for Council-managed species. The development of this guidance document was part of the Council's ongoing review of its risk policy and ABC control rule and is intended to provide a clear, consistent, and transparent process in documenting SSC conclusions regarding the scientific uncertainty of the OFL estimate. The Council approved the guidance document for use, and the new process will be used by the SSC at their September 2019 meeting when they make ABC recommendations for black sea bass, scup, and bluefish.

Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish

2020 Specifications

The Council reviewed Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish (MSB) specifications for 2020, which were previously established as part of multi-year specifications. For squid and butterfish, the Council did not recommend any changes. For Atlantic mackerel, the Council recommended that the 2020 ABC be maintained at the 2019 level, which is a 10% reduction from the earlier multi-year recommendation for 2020. Forgoing a higher ABC in 2020 increases the likelihood of achieving the current rebuilding schedule for Atlantic mackerel (June 2023). An assessment update is expected in 2020 and will inform specifications in future years. The Council will revisit the river herring and shad (RH/S) cap for the 2020 mackerel fishery at the August 2019 meeting and requested that the MSB Monitoring Committee evaluate possible modifications to the 2020 RH/S cap. The Council decided to take no action on possible modifications to the 2019 RH/S cap, which has already closed the Atlantic mackerel fishery at a relatively small portion of its 2019 quota in order to limit RH/S incidental catch.

Illex Working Group and Amendment Update

The Council received an update on a working group tasked with improving quota-setting methods for *Illex squid*. Also related to *Illex*, the Council reviewed scoping comments on an Amendment that will consider modifying the *Illex* squid permitting system as well as the MSB plan's goals and objectives. No specific actions were needed for these agenda items, and development of both efforts will continue throughout 2019.

MAFMC 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

As part of the process for developing its next strategic plan for the years 2020-2024, the Council has been gathering stakeholder input through an online survey, Advisory Panel and SSC meetings, public feedback sessions, and discussions with managements partners. Stakeholders have been asked to comment on how the Council has performed under its current strategic plan and what issues should be addressed in the next plan. During the meeting, the Council reviewed a summary of themes and recommendations that emerged from this process. These results are described in detail in the "Stakeholder Input Report" available at www.mafmc.org/strategic-plan. In the coming months, Council staff will develop a strategic plan framework for Council consideration at the August 2019 meeting.

NMFS Northeast Regional Strategic Plan

Dr. Jon Hare (NEFSC Science and Research Director) presented a draft Greater Atlantic Region Geographic Strategic Plan, which is being developed jointly by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. This plan was developed as part of a national effort to move toward joint regional plans, as opposed to individual plans for regional offices and science centers. All of the regional plans will share the same strategic goals as the NOAA Fisheries National Plan. The Council reviewed the region-specific issues, challenges, and risks identified in the draft plan and agreed to follow up with a formal comment letter.

Unmanaged Species Landings Update

The Council reviewed a report on commercial landings of species that are not managed in the northeast region by the Mid-Atlantic, New England, or South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, or by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The report also included landings of species managed as ecosystem components through the Council's Unmanaged Forage Omnibus Amendment. The report did not show any notable increases

in landings of species caught predominantly in federal waters. The Council will receive annual updates on this report.

NEFSC Fishery Monitoring and Research Division

Several staff members from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center presented an overview of the recently created Fishery Monitoring and Research Division (FMRD). The Division focuses on the collection and use of information from commercial and recreational fisheries to inform fisheries science and management. In addition, Division programs foster engagement between the NEFSC and industry in the development of technology and data products to improve fisheries reporting and availability of data to fishermen, scientists, and managers. The Division includes the Research Set Aside Program, Dockside Monitoring Pilot Program, and Cooperative Research and Fisheries Sampling Branches.

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team Report

The Council received an update on the outcomes of the April 23-26, 2019 Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) meeting in Providence, RI. The goal of the meeting was for team members to identify and recommend modifications to the Take Reduction Plan to further reduce impacts of U.S. fixed gear fisheries on large whales and reduce mortality and serious injury to right whales. The meeting resulted in a package of recommended measures that would achieve at least a 60 percent serious injury and mortality reduction goal in each of the New England lobster management areas. Scoping by states and NMFS will occur over the summer, and a DEIS and proposed rule is anticipated late in the calendar year.

Ricks E Savage Award

Former Council staff member Rich Seagraves was named this year's recipient of the Ricks E Savage award. The award is given each year to a person who has added value to the MAFMC process and management goals through significant scientific, legislative, enforcement, or management activities. Mr. Seagraves retired in 2018 following 26 years of employment with the Council. In his role as Senior Scientist, he served as the liaison with the Scientific and Statistical Committee and oversaw Council activities related to a range of issues, including research planning and prioritization, protected resources, climate change, and collaborative research. Mr. Seagraves was the staff lead on development of the Council's Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management Guidance Document

Next Council Meeting

Tuesday, August 13, 2019 – Thursday, August 15, 2019
Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown
21 N. Juniper St., Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-496-3200

ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY
Director

August 7, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Steve Poland, Executive Assistant for Councils

SUBJECT: South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council Update

Issue
This memo is to update the Marine Fisheries Commission on issues discussed and actions taken by the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council and bring to their attention items of relevance to the state of North Carolina.

Findings

- Actions under the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan include:
  - Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 was initiated to establish a new Annual Catch Limit for Blueline Tilefish, increasing the allowable catch over current levels,
  - Continued work on Abbreviated Amendment 33 to modify Red Snapper seasons and provide the Council with additional flexibility in setting season dates, and
  - Selected preferred actions under Regulatory Amendment 29 to establish a requirement for use of descender devices in the fishery and other actions to reduce discard mortality.
- Actions under the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan include:
  - Further work on Amendment 10 resulted in the removal of actions authorizing bag limit sales of dolphin, allow fileting at seas for vessels north of North Carolina, and allowance of buoy gear in the commercial fishery for dolphin, and
  - Initiated an amendment to protect bullet and frigate mackerel as forage species under the pan.
- An amendment to the Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan was initiated to increase the commercial trip limit for states North of Florida.
- The Council instructed staff to prepare a white paper on potential management options for commercial Northern Zone Spanish mackerel fishery and host port meetings with fisherman to collect additional input on possible actions.
- Further information about these findings and other issues that the Council discussed can be found in the Council meeting report in the briefing book, proceeding this memo.

Action Needed
For informational purposes only, no action is needed at this time.

Overview
The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council met on June 10 – 14, 2019 in Stuart, FL. Highlights of the discussions and management actions taken by the Council are detailed below.

Snapper Grouper actions
Previous actions to address the Blueline Tilefish fishery were delayed due to other Council priorities and delays associated with the incorporation of new recreational catch estimates into updated stock assessments. At the Spring 2019 meeting of the Science and Statistical Committee, the decision was made not to proceed with updating the stock assessment and that recommendations for the Annual Biological Catch from the Committee and a special Blueline Tilefish workgroup from the previous assessment could be used for management. Based on this input the Council initiated Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 to update the Annual Catch Limit for Blueline Tilefish through the management jurisdiction of the Council. The new proposed Annual Catch Limit will increase from 174,798 pounds to 233,968 pounds.

Work continued on Regulatory Amendment 33 with more discussion on potential actions and alternatives which could provide the Council with more flexibility in setting Red Snapper season in the future. A key action is the removal of the three-day minimum fishing season. Currently under Amendment 43, the red snapper season can only be opened if NOAA Fisheries determines that the recreational sector has three or more fishing days based on the previous year's catch rate. Other actions include changing the start date from July 1st, revise the days of the week harvest is allowed to provide flexibility outside of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and modify the start of the commercial season to occur after the recreational season has ended. The council approved sending these actions and alternatives out for public scoping prior to the September Council meeting. Two public hearings will be held in North Carolina at the following date and locations:

- August 14th at 6pm in the Wilmington Regional Office
- August 15 at 6 pm in the Central District Office

The Council continued discussions on Regulatory Amendment 29, Best Fishing Practices and selected preferred alternatives for final action at the September Council meeting. After receiving input from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, the Council modified the actions and alternative as needed. This included removal of the six-month delay in possession and compliance requirements for descending devices, modified the definition of a descending device to improve clarity and intent and hopefully encourage proper use, adjusted the preferred alternatives for circle hook requirements to only require possession and use North of 28 degrees latitude, and remove the prohibition on powerheads off of South Carolina.

Dolphin Wahoo actions
Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10 is the first comprehensive plan amendment since the original adoption in 2004 which necessitates a review of the goals and objectives from the original plan. The Council chose to change the overall format of this section to a table format, similar to the Snapper Grouper Plan, to ease interpretation by stake holders. Discussions about and modifications to the goals of the plan include a re-affirmation that the Plan is intended to be precautionary and take a risk adverse approach to management of the dolphin and wahoo

resources of the Atlantic and to discourage development of new fisheries, evaluate if maintaining status quo in relation to landings has been successful, emphasize the social and economic importance of both the recreational and commercial sectors, and the addition of language that is inclusive of ecosystem based management and preservation of access to the resources by both sectors. Objectives of the plan were modified to ensure that the new goals could be met.

Actions and alternatives were reviewed and additional modifications were made. Alternatives were added to actions adjusting the Annual Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limit definitions for dolphin to allow for more of a buffer to account for uncertainty in the stock status of the species. Buoy gear was proposed as a new allowable gear in the fishery and an associated incidental trip limit option was added for the commercial fishery for vessels that have this gear on board. After considerable discussion of the pros and cons of allowing bag limit sales of dolphin from dually permitted vessels, the council decided to remove this action from consideration. Vessel limits for both the recreational and commercial sectors of dolphin were discussed and actions were modified to include additional options for reducing these limits. Finally, a request from the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council to allow fileting at sea of dolphinfish was debated. The Council modified and accepted the request for vessels fishing North of North Carolina.

Lastly, the Council reviewed scoping comments received about potentially adding bullet and frigate as Ecosystem Component species to the Dolphin Wahoo plan, affording them protection as forage fish for dolphin and wahoo. The Council debated the merits of management of these prey species and decided to initiate an amendment that would designate bullet and frigate mackerel as forage for dolphinfish and wahoo and come back to the Council with potential management options to limit and constrain harvest of these species.

Miscellaneous actions

The Council directed staff to initiate and amendment to adjust the commercial trip limit for spiny lobster north of Florida. The original request came from fisherman in North and South Carolina who expressed frustration with the current low commercial trip limits in the waters off of their states and the fact that the fishery is not overfished. Additionally, stakeholders expressed a desire to capitalize on a lucrative market for the tails in the region.

A report from the April Coastal Migratory Pelagics Advisory Panel meeting was presented to the Council. The panel reviewed issues related to king and Spanish mackerel commercial fisheries in both the Northern and Southern zones and made recommendations to the Council for port meetings to be held in all of the South Atlantic states to gather input from mackerel fisherman on the future of management of the two species. Concerns raised from fisherman in the Spanish mackerel fishery are the early closures in 2017 and 2018 that impacted access during the height of the fishery. The Council instructed staff to gather information about the Spanish mackerel fishery in the Northern zone and prepare a white paper for Council review at an upcoming meeting.

Executive Director Gregg Waugh announced his retirement from the Council after 39 years of service. He will work through the end of 2019 to assist the next Director in the transition to their new role. The Council will interview applicants at their September meeting and make a final decision before the end of the meeting.

Upcoming Events

The Next meeting of the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council will be September 16 – 20, 2019 in Charleston, FL.

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston SC 29405
Call: (843) 571-4366 | Toll-Free: (866) SAFMC-10 | Fax: (843) 769-4520 | Connect: www.safmc.net

Jessica McCawley, Chair | Mel Bell, Vice Chair
Gregg T. Waugh, Executive Director

JUNE 10-14, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT
REVISION #2 6/26/19
STUART, FLORIDA

The following summary highlights the major issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's June 2019 meeting in Stuart, Florida. Briefing materials, presentations, and public comments are available on the Council's website at: http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/

Final Committee Reports contain more details of what was accomplished for each committee and are located on the June 2019 briefing book page. In addition, the Summary of Motions on the Council's website includes all motions from the meeting. Read further details and see images and other links at the June 2019 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map: https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=f1f50b22ef0e4130b1fadf1c3c852be8

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Mackerel Emergency Action	The Council approved requesting NMFS raise the commercial king mackerel trip limit south of the Flagler/Volusia County line, Florida from 50-fish to 75-fish for the 2019-2020 season via emergency rule. The value of unharvested quota over the last four fishing seasons averaged $3,885,647 per season.	The Council's letter requesting emergency action will be sent to NMFS during the week of June 17th with a request to implement this prior to Season 2 of the 2019-2020 season.
CMP Framework Amendment 8 – the Council approved various alternatives to permanently increase the trip limit in the southern zone.	Alternative trip limits for Season 2 include: 1. 75 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 100 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed 2. 100 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 150 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed 3. 150 fish 10/1-1/31 with increase to 175 fish in Feb if less than 70% of quota landed	Staff and the IPT will work on CMP Framework Amendment 8 and bring analyses back to the Council at the September Council meeting. The Council's intent is to have these permanent regulations in place prior to the start of the 2020/21 fishing year.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Atlantic Spanish Mackerel Commercial effort	The Council directed staff to prepare a white paper with a thorough analysis of effort in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery and a discussion of possible avenues to control effort, including: a limited access commercial permit, a limited access gillnet endorsement in the southern zone, and collaboration with state agencies. The Council approved a control date of March 7, 2019 when they began considering effort controls for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.	The Committee & Council will review the white paper in September and determine how to move forward. Once published in the Federal Register, this control date will put everyone on notice that should the Council decide to move forward with an effort limitation program, anyone entering the fishery after this date would not be guaranteed participation in the program.
Visioning Process in the Mackerel Cobia fishery	Prepare for port meetings to get a complete picture of the commercial and recreational king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.	The Council will determine the timing of port meetings at the September meeting.
Issue:	**Action Taken:**	**Schedule:**
Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 (South Atlantic Blueline Tilefish ACL)	The Council directed staff to begin development of framework Amendment 3 to establish a new South Atlantic blueline tilefish Annual Catch Limit (ACL).	The Council will review the document in September and provide guidance. Public comments will be taken at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC. The Council will make any necessary revisions and consider approving for formal review at the December meeting.
Spawning Special Management Zone Story Map	The Council approved the story map for review and comment by the Information & Education, Law Enforcement, and Snapper Grouper Advisory Panels. This is intended as an outreach tool for the public to learn about the areas protected and the target species, the process to create and review the managed areas, the goals and objectives for the areas, and regulations in the areas.	The Advisory Panels will review at their next meetings. The Council will consider any revisions suggested by the advisory panels and will publicize this information.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 33 (Red Snapper Season Modifications)	Options being considered: 1.Remove minimum #days (3) for a season – keep or remove. 2.Modify recreational season start date: a. No Action – weekends only (Fri, Sat, Sun) begins on 2nd Friday in July unless otherwise specified. b. May 1st , June 1st or September 1st. 3.Revise days of the week harvest allowed during recreational season a. No Action – Fri, Sat, Sun. b. On consecutive Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays. c. Every other weekend – specify days. d. Last weekend of month – specify days. e. Council specifies at March meeting. f. Allow harvest in May for a portion of the days and resume harvest in the fall is enough ACL remains. 4.Modify commercial season start date: a. No Action – 2nd Monday in July, unless otherwise specified. b. 2nd Monday in May, unless otherwise specified. c. 2nd Monday in June, unless otherwise specified. d. May 1st but no commercial harvest allowed during July and August.	The Council approved Regulatory Amendment 33 for public hearings to be conducted via webinars and listening stations during August. The Council will review public input, make any needed changes, and provide guidance to staff at the September 16-20, 2019 Council meeting in Charleston, SC. The Council's intent is to approve for formal review at the December 2-6, 2019 Council meeting in Wilmington, NC.
Red Grouper Regulatory Amendment 30	The Council reviewed the amendment & regulations, and approved them for formal review. Actions include: • Revise the rebuilding schedule to equal the maximum time allowed to rebuild (Tmax) which is 10 years ending in 2028 with 2019 = Year 1. • Jan thru April no recreational or commercial harvest/possession/sale/purchase of any shallow-water grouper (gag, black grouper, scamp, red grouper, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, red hind, rock hind, grasby, or coney) and extend the closure off NC & SC for red grouper in May. • Establish a commercial red grouper trip limit = 200 pounds gutted weight.	The Council will send Regulatory Amendment 30 and regulations to NMFS for formal review and implementations by the end of June 2019.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29 (Best Fishing Practices & Powerheads)	The Council reviewed public comments, document and: 1. Removed the 6 month delay in effectiveness from the preferred alternative that would require that a descending device be on board all vessels (commercial, for-hire, & private) fishing for or possessing species in the snapper grouper fishery management unit. 2. Modified the definition of descending device: " For the purpose of this requirement, "descending device" means an instrument, SUFFICIENTLY WEIGHTED, that will release fish at a depth sufficient for the fish to be able to recover from the effects of barotrauma, A MINIMUM OF 33 feet (twice the atmospheric pressure at the surface) or greater AND ideally released at the same depth that it was caught. The device can be, but is not limited to, a weighted hook, lip clamp, or box that will hold the fish while it is lowered to depth. The device should be capable of releasing the fish automatically, releasing the fish by actions of the operator of the device, or by allowing the fish to escape on its own. Since minimizing surface time is critical to increasing survival, descending devices shall be rigged and ready for use while fishing is occurring. 3. Require the use of non-offset, non-stainless-steel circle hooks when using hook-and-line gear and natural baits in the EEZ north of 28 degrees north latitude (about 25 miles south of Cape Canaveral, FL). 4. Require use of non-stainless-steel hooks when fishing with hook-and-line gear and natural baits in the EEZ. 5. Allow powerheads in the EEZ off SC.	The Council will review the draft regulations and document at the September 16-20, 2019 meeting in Charleston, SC and consider approval for formal review.
Wreckfish ITQ Review	The Council received an update and will see a final document in September.	The Council will consider approving the final document at the September 16-20, 2019 meeting in Charleston, SC.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Snapper Grouper Options Paper for removing Almaco Jack from the Jacks Complex	The Council directed staff to begin work on a white paper to consider removing Almaco jacks from the Jacks Complex.	The Council will review the white paper at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.
Lionfish and traps	SERO notified the committee that the General Prohibitions in the Code of Federal Regulations that specify the authorized gear types by fishery need minor corrections for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council section. In addition, SERO suggested that Council and SERO staff jointly develop an informational paper for the Council's review in September 2019 that considers the addition of authorized gear types for lionfish (non-FMP) to the regulations to authorize the retention of lionfish taken while legally fishing additional gear types. In addition, the informational paper would consider refining the fish trap definition to authorize the retention of lionfish incidentally taken in legally fished traps when that bycatch exceeds 25% of the trap's catch. The informational paper would outline any unintended consequences of taking these two actions.	The Council will review the white paper at the September 2019 meeting and provide guidance.
Issue:	**Action Taken:**	**Schedule:**
Spiny Lobster Spiny lobster commercial trip limit for vessels with snapper grouper unlimited permit (SG1) and a spiny lobster tailing permit.	The Council directed staff to work on a Regulatory Amendment to create a commercial trip limit for such vessels off NC, SC, and GA: 1.No Action. Commercial possession limit = 2/person. 2.Commercial possession limit of 20, 30 or 40 lobsters/vessel.	• Scoping if necessary in Summer 2019 • Select actions/alternatives to include in the amendment – December 2019

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Allocation Trigger Policy	The Council reiterated its desire to apply both indicator-based and time-based criteria as triggers for re-examining allocations and modified them. The Council reviewed a spreadsheet with information regarding the first year a time-based allocation trigger would be reviewed. They reiterated their desire to have time-based criteria triggered every seven years should no other indicator-based criterion trigger a review. When a review is triggered, for any reason, the year of the next review will be set 7 years after the most recent review. For indicator based triggers the Council updated the wording of the triggers: **INDICATOR BASED TRIGGERS:** • Either sector exceeds its ACL or closes prior to the end of its fishing year 3 out of 5 consecutive years. • Either sector under-harvests its ACL or OY by at least 50% 3 out of 5 consecutive years. • After a stock assessment is approved by the SSC and presented to the Council. • After the Council reviews a species Fishery Performance Report.	The Council will send the final allocation trigger policy to NMFS by the end of June 2019. The Council directed staff to prepare an allocation trigger status report to be presented during the Executive Finance Committee for the December Council meeting each year beginning in 2020.
Issue:	**Action Taken:**	**Schedule:**
SSC Selection	The Council reappointed the 6 members who reapplied (Robert Ahrens, Luiz Barbieri, Jeff Buckel, Churchill Grimes, Genevieve Nesslage, and George Sedberry). There is one open seat and the expertise most needed at this time is general ecology, ecosystems, and habitat. The Council appointed Dr. Wilson Laney.	Letters will be sent out by the end of June.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Dolphin Wahoo Goals & Objectives	The Council reviewed the goals and objectives and provided guidance to staff.	The Council will review the revised goals/objectives at the September 2019 meeting.
Amendment 10	The Council reviewed Amendment 10 and provided guidance to staff: • In Action 1 and 2, provide sub-alternatives that allow for a buffer between the ABC and the ACL. • In Action 10, add language that would allow options to encompass buoy gear and all trap or pot gear. Also add language to implement incidental trip limits that would apply for dolphin when these gears are onboard. Look at a range of 250 to 1,000 lbs gutted weight by 250 lbs increments. • Request further information from the Office of Protected Resources on timing of the new biological opinions for Dolphin Wahoo and Highly Migratory Species. • Add recreational accountability measures. • Do not allow bag limit sales of dolphin. • Consider reducing the dolphin vessel limit. • Allow filleting of dolphin at sea onboard for-hire vessels in the waters north of the Virginia/North Carolina border (skin on entire fillet, 2 fillets = 1 fish, and no frames need to be retained).	The Council will review a revised Amendment 10 document at the September 2019 meeting.
	The Council reviewed scoping comments on mechanisms and regulatory parameters for adding ecosystem component (EC) species to a fishery management plan (FMP), ways that other Councils have addressed EC species in FMPs, as well as background information on fisheries for bullet mackerel, frigate mackerel, and other major prey species for dolphin and wahoo. The Council directed staff to initiate an amendment that would designate bullet and frigate mackerel as ecosystem component species within the Dolphin Wahoo FMP to acknowledge their role as forage for dolphin and wahoo (intent to include appropriate regulatory actions).	The Council will review an options paper on adding bullet and frigate mackerel as ecosystem component species (including appropriate regulatory actions) at the September 16-20, 2019 meeting in Charleston, SC.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
SEDAR	The Council made appointments to the SEDAR assessment of scamp and received an update of ongoing assessment projects. Results of the red snapper stock assessment should be available for Council consideration in 2022. The Council concurred that the terms of reference for the MRIP review prepared by the SSC address Council concerns and direction. The Council reviewed the research plan, suggested highlighting the need for acoustic tagging projects in closed areas, and approved the research plan.	Scamp appointments will be notified. The SEDAR Committee will review the black sea bass and red grouper assessment's scopes of work prior to sending to the SEFSC. The research plan will be sent to the SERO and SEFSC, and distributed. The final SSC MRIP workshop terms of reference will be distributed to the Council.
AP Selection	The Council removed the sector-specific seat designation on the Habitat and Ecosystem-Based Management AP and modified the structure of the AP to create an agency seat for the current at-large geologist/research seat. Given that management of Atlantic cobia was transferred to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Council dissolved the Cobia Sub-Panel on the Mackerel Cobia AP.	These changes will be implemented immediately. The Council acknowledged the valuable contributions of the members of the Cobia Sub-Panel and directed staff to ensure their appreciation is reflected in follow-up communications. The Council will discuss forming a new AP to address species moving northwards at the next meeting.
MyFishCount	Chip Collier, Council staff, gave an update: • 977 users/member profiles (115 increase since last Council meeting). • 817 vessels (increase of 78) logged trips. • 2,709 fish reported. • App & web portal continue to be promoted; Spring 2019 webinar trainings were conducted around grouper opening/ webinar training will continue. • Cooperation with SC Wildlife Federation on a Best Fishing Practices tutorial. • Shiny app (data.safmc.net/MyFishCount) that allows anglers to access information collected through MyFishCount. • Survey to understand angler perceptions & opinions. • Data are being edited and uploaded to ACCSP; the API is now complete.	Bebe Harrison was hired and will work with private recreational fishermen to have them report, especially during the red snapper season openings. This experience will be used by the Council as they continue to work on the permitting and reporting amendment at the December 2-6, 2019 meeting in Wilmington, NC.

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Citizen Science Program	John Carmichael, Council staff, gave an update: • Julia Byrd, Program Manager – transition going well. • SAFMC Team led a symposium at the Citizen Science 2019 Conference. • Scamp app to collect discard data for the next assessment – launching soon. • FISHstory, a pilot project to document the historical catch and length distribution for early headboat catches is ongoing. • Collaborator on TNC project in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. • Continuing Partnership Development.	Work will continue on the program and these two projects. The Scamp app is being rolled-out in June and the photo project is progressing; the first batch of scanned pictures have been received. Scamp results will be available for 2020 scamp assessment. The length data will be available for future assessments once the project is completed.
For-Hire Recreational Reporting	In March, the Council received an update on the amendment: The Amendment was approved on June 12, 2018 and the Final Rule was expected to publish in mid-April 2019 with a 60-day cooling off period.	At the June meeting, the Council was told the final rule is still being reviewed. No specific timing was available. The Council cancelled training workshops previously scheduled for June since the final rule was not available.
Full Council Actions: 1. NC Aquarium EFP request	The Council recommended approval of the request with a recommendation that they purchase, rather than harvest, live rock.	The Council will send letters related to each of these items before the end of June.
2. Highly Migratory Species (HMS)	In reference to Amendment 13 (Bluefin Tuna), the Council approved sending a comment letter to HMS that supports immediate discontinuation of the purse seine fishery with redistribution of that quota as appropriate. Also express continued support to extend the January sub-quota to the end of April.	
3. Council Letter on Bigeye & Yellowfin Tuna Management	The Council approved supporting the bigeye and yellowfin tuna management letter drafted on behalf of the 5 East Coast Councils.	
4. Biscayne National Park	The Council directed staff to send a letter to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission indicating that the Council does not want a role in directly managing the portion of the EEZ in the Park and requesting the Council be kept advised of ongoing activities.	
5. Blackfin Tuna in FL	The Council approved sending a letter to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission indicating the Council does not intend to regulate blackfin tuna.	
6. China Tariffs on Seafood	The Council directed staff to send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce about the impacts of tariffs on seafood (e.g., spiny lobster).	

ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY
Director

August 7, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Randy Gregory, Division of Marine Fisheries, NCDEQ

SUBJECT: Highly Migratory Species Update

Issue
Highly Migratory Species activity update.

Action Needed
For informational purposes only, no action is needed at this time.

Overview
The Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel met May 21-23, 2019 in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Advisory Panel discussed Amendment 7 bluefin tuna management three-year review, a proposed rule and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for pelagic longline bluefin tuna area-based weak hook management measures, and scoping for Amendment 13 (bluefin tuna). In July, NOAA Fisheries held scoping meetings in Morehead City and in Manteo for Amendment 13, Amendment 14 (shark quota management), and a proposed action for Spatial Management Research considering ways to perform research and collect data in closed fishing areas.

Tuna
In May, NOAA Fisheries announced its intent to prepare an environmental impact analysis for Amendment 13 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. This amendment considers refining the Individual Bluefin Tuna Quota Program for the pelagic longline fishery, reassessing allocation of bluefin tuna quotas (including the discontinuing or phasing out of the Purse Seine category), and other regulatory provisions regarding bluefin tuna directed fisheries and incidental pelagic longline fisheries. Potential changes to the Individual Bluefin Tuna Quota program are based on the recently released Draft Three-Year Review of the Individual Bluefin Tuna Quota Program. In July, NOAA Fisheries held scoping meetings in Morehead City and Manteo; however, both meetings were lightly attended by the public.

In July, NOAA Fisheries announced a proposed rule to adjust regulatory measures put in place to manage bluefin tuna bycatch in the pelagic longline fishery for Atlantic highly migratory species, specifically addressing the Northeastern United States Closed Area, the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area, and the Spring Gulf of Mexico Gear Restricted Area as well as the weak hook requirement in the Gulf of Mexico. Amendment 7 implemented pelagic longline gear restrictions

in areas identified as locations of high bluefin tuna concentrations and interactions with pelagic longline gear. The Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area was established in 2015 off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and is in place from December 1 through April 30 annually. While the area encompassed by the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area had a high level of bluefin interactions, the majority of interactions were by only a few pelagic longline vessels. Due to this dynamic, NOAA Fisheries implemented performance measures to grant "qualified" fishery participants access to the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area. Amendment 7 also shifted the focus of managing bluefin tuna bycatch in the pelagic longline fishery from fleet-wide management measures to individual vessel accountability through the implementation of a bluefin tuna catch share program (i.e., the Individual Bluefin Quota). A recent Draft Three-Year Review of the Individual Bluefin Quota Program drew preliminary conclusions that the program has successfully reduced bluefin tuna interactions and dead discards in the pelagic longline fishery. The proposed measure would eliminate the Cape Hatteras Gear Restricted Area due to the success of the Individual Bluefin Quota Program.

Sharks

In May, NOAA Fisheries announced the availability of the scoping document on Amendment 14 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan and its intent to prepare an environmental impact statement given revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act National Standard 1 guidelines. NOAA Fisheries is exploring options related to the implementation of those new guidelines as they relate to annual catch limits for Atlantic sharks in the highly migratory species management unit. In the scoping document, NOAA Fisheries begins the process for re-examining how to establish these annual catch limits (determining of how to establish the acceptable biological catch), accounting for uncertainty arising from the stock assessment, and the impacts to management measures.

Red Drum Landings 2017-2019

Landings are complete through April 30, 2019.
2017 and 2018 landings are final. 2019 landings are preliminary.

Year	Month	Species	Pounds	2009-2011 Average	2013-2015 Average	
2017	9	Red Drum	28,280	28,991	35,003	
2017	10	Red Drum	58,824	43,644	63,662	
2017	11	Red Drum	28,201	14,318	27,643	
2017	12	Red Drum	4,714	3,428	2,197	
2018	1	Red Drum	2,056	5,885	1,699	
2018	2	Red Drum	2,176	3,448	3,996	
2018	3	Red Drum	4,797	5,699	3,971	
2018	4	Red Drum	17,096	7,848	6,528	
2018	5	Red Drum	15,656	13,730	9,664	
2018	6	Red Drum	11,678	12,681	6,985	
2018	7	Red Drum	9,949	13,777	15,618	
2018	8	Red Drum	14,995	21,252	15,846	
Fishing Year (Sept 1, 2017 - Aug 31, 2018) Landings			**198,421**			

Year	Month	Species	Pounds	2009-2011 Average	2013-2015 Average	
2018	9	Red Drum	11,149	28,991	35,003	
2018	10	Red Drum	42,805	43,644	63,662	
2018	11	Red Drum	10,076	14,318	27,643	
2018	12	Red Drum	2,052	3,428	2,197	
2019	1	Red Drum	2,101	5,885	1,699	
2019	2	Red Drum	1,952	3,448	3,996	
2019	3	Red Drum	1,563	5,699	3,971	
2019	4	Red Drum	5,530	7,848	6,528	
2019	5	Red Drum	9,171	13,730	9,664	*
2019	6	Red Drum	4,303	12,681	6,985	*
Fishing Year (Sept 1, 2018 - Aug 31, 2019) Landings			**90,701**			

*partial trip ticket landings only
***landings are confidential

Year	Month	Species	Pounds	Dealers	Trips	Average (2007-2009)	
2016	1	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	2,625	33	264	7,713	
2016	2	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	1,643	31	291	4,617	
2016	3	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	9,260	58	915	23,512	
2016	4	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	10,558	72	628	68,389	
2016	5	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	24,522	90	821	122,514	
2016	6	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	44,952	100	1,242	154,090	
2016	7	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	43,574	102	1,132	170,387	
2016	8	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	53,057	106	1,409	201,862	
2016	9	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	246,269	131	3,011	396,301	
2016	10	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	280,689	117	2,181	781,717	
2016	11	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	182,768	102	1,479	392,150	
2016	12	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	14	5	5	37,303	
2017	1	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	1,677	38	122	7,713	
2017	2	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	2,758	55	215	4,617	
2017	3	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	8,254	67	874	23,512	
2017	4	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	9,591	83	787	68,389	
2017	5	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	33,105	105	1,121	122,514	
2017	6	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	74,785	115	1,904	154,090	
2017	7	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	74,879	108	1,755	170,387	
2017	8	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	102,751	116	2,364	201,862	
2017	9	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	235,915	128	2,849	396,301	
2017	10	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	548,740	142	3,971	781,717	
2017	11	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	302,286	123	2,003	392,150	
2017	12	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	166	7	8	37,303	
2018	1	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	610	14	43	7,713	
2018	2	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	1,833	34	154	4,617	
2018	3	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	2,815	43	387	23,512	
2018	4	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	7,971	72	759	68,389	
2018	5	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	18,271	89	947	122,514	
2018	6	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	42,501	105	1,407	154,090	
2018	7	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	57,273	117	1,495	170,387	
2018	8	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	72,528	121	1,917	201,862	
2018	9	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	109,125	114	1,776	396,301	
2018	10	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	363,339	109	3,062	781,717	
2018	11	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	226,832	89	1,352	392,150	
2018	12	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	471	5	5	37,303	
2019	1	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	524	25	74	7,713	
2019	2	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	558	23	69	4,617	
2019	3	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	1,414	45	217	23,512	
2019	4	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	5,702	65	434	68,389	
2019	5	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	29,108	57	819	122,514	*
2019	6	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	43,017	48	1,021	154,090	*
2019	7	SOUTHERN FLOUNDER	283	3	15	170,387	*

*2019 data are preliminary. Data are complete through April 2019.

***data are confidential

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Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

STEPHEN W. MURPHEY
Director

August 7, 2019

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Lara Klibansky, Protected Resources Biologist Supervisor

SUBJECT: Protected Resources Program Update

Issue
Summary information is provided from the division's Protected Resources Program from January through May 2019.

Findings

- Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team reaches near consensus for management recommendations to reach 60-80% reduction in North Atlantic Right Whale mortalities and serious injuries in U.S. fisheries.

Action Needed
For informational purposes only, no action is needed at this time.

Overview

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) Meeting

North Carolina is a member of the ALWTRT, an advisory team established by NOAA Fisheries and composed of fishermen, scientists, conservationists, as well as state and federal officials. The goal of the team is to assist with the development of plans to reduce the risk to marine mammals posed by fishing gear. Division staff attended the April ALWTRT meeting in Providence, RI. The objective of the meeting was to "develop consensus recommendations on a suite of measures that will achieve a 60 to 80% reduction in mortalities and serious injuries of right whales in U.S. fisheries to support NMFS rulemaking that will be initiated in May 2019". The meeting was a success with a near consensus, and only a single dissenter, reached among the fifty-six-member team supporting management strategies that are predicted to achieve the required take reduction. The primary strategies are significant vertical line reductions combined with various versions of weak vertical lines. The focus of these strategies was the lobster pot fishery in the Northeast, as a result the strategies were parsed out by lobster management areas (LMA). LMAs 3 and 5 are offshore of North Carolina and the rule resulting from these recommendations may impact the ocean pot fishery in these areas.

Observer Program

Tables summarizing observer coverage and protected species takes* from January through May 2019 are included. Tables 1–4 provide the estimated trips, observed trips, actual trips as recorded by trip ticket data, observer coverage, and protected species interactions for anchored large and small mesh gill nets by month and management unit. Please note that current observer coverage values are calculated using the average number of trips from previous years' finalized trip ticket data. A final observer coverage value will be calculated when trip ticket data are finalized. Table 5 contains the gill net regulation changes that occurred from January to June 2019.

There were four observed sea turtle takes in large mesh gill nets during the month of May. These takes consisted of two live Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles, one live Green Sea Turtle and one dead Green Sea Turtle. June data are still being processed and are not reported here, but a number of observed sea turtle takes in Management Unit D2 resulted in its closure to large mesh gill nets for the remainder of the 2019 Incidental Take Permit year. No sea turtle takes were observed in the small mesh gill net fishery and there were no fishermen self-reported sea turtle takes during this time.

There was one observed live Atlantic Sturgeon take in large mesh gill nets and two takes, one live and one dead, in small mesh gill nets between January and May 2019. There were four Atlantic Sturgeon reported by Marine Patrol in illegally set or abandoned gill nets. These four sturgeon were reported and not observed, therefore they are noted but are not included as a part of our annual authorized takes. Marine Patrol also reported an Atlantic Sturgeon carcass which was found on a beach.

***Definitions**

Take, as defined in the Endangered Species Act, means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.

Incidental take means to unintentionally, but not unexpectedly, take.

Table 1. Preliminary data collected for large mesh gill nets by month and management unit through the NCDMF Observer Program through May 2019.

								Observed Takes By Species								
		Trips		Observer Large Mesh				Kemp's		Green		Loggerhead		Unknown	A.Sturgeon	
Month	Unit	Estimated [1]	Actual [2]	AP Attempts [3]	Trips	Yards	Coverage [4]	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Live	Dead
January	A	251	264	30	16	5,920	6.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	25	3	14	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	5	10	13	1	100	20.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	0	0	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	0	5	6	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	6	6	46	3	600	50.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	A	362	198	45	19	11,108	5.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	39	8	12	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	63	11	18	8	5,230	12.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	0	0	6	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	2	2	5	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	15	5	48	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	A	863	843	25	63	34,156	7.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	44	19	13	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	685	6	16	2	100	0.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	0	0	2	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	6	1	3	2	800	33.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	44	16	44	1	500	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	A	714	667	22	22	10,900	3.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	95	92	10	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	165	4	11	9	3,750	5.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	1	0	10	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	21	4	13	4	1,600	19.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	83	64	39	3	450	3.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	A	141	124	41	15	11,140	10.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	B	126	247	21	29	19,750	23.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	103	13	17	10	1,525	9.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	1	0	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	42	51	11	5	2,730	12.0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	126	73	63	26	9,000	20.7	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total		4,027	2,736	606	238	119,359	5.9	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

[1] Finalized trip ticket data averaged from 2014-2018

[2] Preliminary trip ticket data for 2019

[3] Alternative Platform trips where no fishing activity was found

[4] Based on estimated trips and observer large mesh trips

Table 2. Preliminary data collected for large mesh gill nets by month through the NCDMF Observer Program through May 2019.

							Observed Takes By Species								
	Trips		Observer Large Mesh				Kemp's		Green		Loggerhead		Unknown	A. Sturgeon [5]	
Month	Estimated [1]	Actual [2]	AP Attempts [3]	Trips	Yards	Coverage [4]	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Live	Dead
January	287	288	110	20	6,620	7.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	481	224	134	27	16,338	5.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	1,642	885	103	68	35,556	4.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	1,079	831	105	38	16,700	3.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	538	508	154	85	44,145	15.8	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Total	4,027	2,736	606	238	119,359	5.9	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

[1] Finalized trip ticket data averaged from 2014-2018

[2] Preliminary trip ticket data for 2019

[3] Alternative Platform trips where no fishing activity was found

[4] Based on estimated trips and observer large mesh trips

Table 3. Preliminary data collected for small mesh gill nets by month and management unit through the NCDMF Observer Program through May 2019.

							Observed Takes By Species								
		Trips		Observer Small Mesh			Kemp's		Green		Loggerhead		Unknown	A. Sturgeon	
Month	Unit	Estimated [1]	Actual [2]	Trips	Yards	Coverage [3]	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Live	Dead
January	A	334	183	2	700	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	144	181	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	60	87	8	2,800	13.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	14	8	3	600	21.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	20	28	3	900	15.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	A	405	173	6	1,860	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	175	196	17	7,530	9.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	102	77	18	7,400	17.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	D1	1	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	8	5	3	500	37.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	14	16	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	A	380	405	8	2,050	2.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	288	302	21	10,045	7.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	124	72	10	4,360	8.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	6	8	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	3	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	19	16	2	400	10.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	A	270	316	5	1,600	1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	675	670	20	11,250	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	C	53	12	3	1,300	5.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	25	26	3	1,300	12.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	14	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	55	25	1	50	1.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	A	114	67	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	B	343	365	2	300	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	C	44	1	3	300	6.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D1	5	6	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	D2	17	4	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E	72	11	2	230	2.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		3,785	3,261	140	55,475	3.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1] Finalized trip ticket data averaged from 2014-2018

[2] Preliminary trip ticket data for 2019

[3] Based on estimated trips and observer small mesh trips

Table 4. Preliminary data collected for small mesh gill nets by month through the NCDMF Observer Program through May 2019.

	Trips		Observer Small Mesh			Observed Takes By Species								
						Kemp's		Green		Loggerhead		Unknown	A. Sturgeon	
Month	Estimated [1]	Actual [2]	Trips	Yards	Coverage [3]	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Dead	Live	Live	Dead
January	572	487	16	5,000	2.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	704	467	44	17,290	6.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
March	821	804	41	16,855	5.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
April	1,091	1,049	32	15,500	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
May	596	454	7	830	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,098	1,758	101	39,145	4.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

[1] Finalized trip ticket data averaged from 2014-2018

[2] Preliminary trip ticket data for 2019

[3] Based on estimated trips and observer small mesh trips

Table 5. Gill net regulation changes that occurred from January through June 2019 in accordance with the Sea Turtle and Atlantic Sturgeon Incidental Take Permits.

Date	Description of Regulation Change (Proclamation referenced)
January 1	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-14-2018 dated November 29, 2018. In Management Unit A, it is unlawful to use gill nets with a stretched mesh length other than 3 ¼ inches, or from 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches, EXCEPT IN THE AREAS DESCRIBED IN SECTION IV. It also maintains large mesh gill net closures and vertical height restrictions for all anchored gill net sets. This action is being taken to allow various directed gill net fisheries while minimizing interactions with endangered Atlantic sturgeon and to reduce river herring regulatory discards. (M-17-2018)
February 1	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-17-2018 dated December 21, 2018. In a portion of Management Unit A, it makes it lawful to use runaround, strike, and drop gill nets with a stretched mesh length from 5 ½ inches through 6 ½ inches. It also maintains large mesh gill net closures and vertical height restrictions for all anchored gill net sets. This action is being taken to allow a directed fishery for invasive blue catfish and continue to allow other various directed gill net fisheries while minimizing interactions with endangered Atlantic sturgeon and to reduce river herring regulatory discards. (M-2-2019)
February 15	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-10-2018 dated September 28, 2018. This proclamation implements gear exemptions for portions of the Internal Coastal Waters south of Management Unit A to allow fishermen to set gill nets for the shad fishery (See Section III.). It opens the remaining portions of Management Unit B to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section III.) in accordance with the Sea Turtle Incidental Take Permit. This proclamation also maintains openings for Management Units C, D2 and portions of Management Unit E (except those described in Section II.) to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches. This action is being taken to allow directed gill net fisheries for shad while minimizing interactions with threatened and/or endangered species. (M-3-2019)
March 2	This proclamation supersedes Proclamation M-2-2019 dated January 30, 2019. It opens all of Management Unit A to the use of gill nets and allows gill net configurations for harvesting American shad by removing vertical height restrictions for up to 1,000 yards of gill net with stretched mesh lengths of 5 ¼ through 6 ½ inches. This proclamation also implements additional gill net restrictions for Management Unit A, Subunit A1-South of US-64-BYP/US-64, in accordance with the Sea Turtle and Atlantic Sturgeon ITPs. Proclamation FF-56-2018 makes it unlawful to possess American shad for commercial purposes prior to 12:01 A.M. Sunday, March 3, 2019 and after 12:01 A.M. Sunday, March 24, 2019. (M-4-2019)
March 11	This proclamation implements tie-down (vertical net height restrictions) and distance from shore restrictions for gill nets with a stretched mesh length five inches or greater in the western Pamlico Sound and rivers in accordance with Supplement A to Amendment 1 to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. (M-5-2019)

Table 5. Continued

March 18	During an emergency meeting on March 13, 2019, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission directed the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Director to issue this proclamation pursuant to N.C. General Statute 113-221.1 (d). The Director has no legal authority to modify or change a proclamation when the proclamation is specifically directed by the Commission under this statute. This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-5-2019, dated March 7, 2019. This proclamation prohibits the use of ALL gill nets upstream of the ferry lines from the Bayview Ferry to Aurora Ferry on the Pamlico River and the Minnesott Beach Ferry to Cherry Branch Ferry on the Neuse River. It maintains tie-down (vertical net height restrictions) and distance from shore restrictions for gill nets with a stretched mesh length 5 inches and greater in the western Pamlico Sound and rivers (excluding the areas described in Section I. B.) in accordance with Supplement A to Amendment 1 to the N.C. Estuarine Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan. (M-6-2019)
March 25	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-4-2019 dated February 27, 2019. In Management Unit A it removes the use of gill nets configured for harvesting American shad by implementing vertical height restrictions for all stationary gill nets. This proclamation also closes portions of Management Unit A to large mesh stationary gill nets, allows the use of run-around, strike, and drop nets with a stretched mesh length of 5½ inches through 6½ inches in a portion of Management Unit A, and maintains additional gill net restrictions for Management Unit A, Subunit A1, South of US-64-BYP/US-64, in accordance with the Sea Turtle and Atlantic Sturgeon ITPs. (M-7-2019)
April 8	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-7-2019 dated March 22, 2019. It opens additional portions of Management Unit A to the use of stationary large mesh gill nets with vertical height restrictions. It also maintains the allowance for the use of run-around, strike, and drop nets with a stretched mesh length of 5½ inches through 6½ inches in a portion of Management Unit A, Subunit A2, and maintains additional gill net restrictions for Management Unit A, Subunit A1, South of US-64-BYP/US-64, in accordance with the Sea Turtle and Atlantic Sturgeon ITPs. (M-9-2019)
May 1	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-3-2019 dated February 12, 2019. This proclamation implements attendance requirements for gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 4 inches in Management Subunit B.1. It also decreases mesh size allowance for exempted gears in Section III. It maintains openings of Management Units B, C, D2 and E to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches. (M-10-2019)
May 1	This proclamation supersedes proclamation M-9-2019 dated April 5, 2019. It implements small mesh gill net attendance requirements in Management Unit A and implements additional gill net restrictions in accordance with the Sea Turtle and Atlantic Sturgeon ITPs. (M-11-2019)
June 13	This proclamation supersedes Proclamation M-10-2019 dated April 26, 2019. This proclamation closes Management Unit D2 to the use of gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches (except as described in Section III.) in accordance with the Sea Turtle Incidental Take Permit. Take levels for endangered and/or threatened sea turtles for gill nets with a stretched mesh length of 4 inches through 6 ½ inches in Management Unit D2 have been reached and the fishery must be closed. This proclamation maintains attendance requirements for gill nets with a stretched mesh length less than 4 inches in Management Subunit B.1. (M-12-2019)