



ASMFC

# FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Upcoming Meetings

page 2

### From the Executive Director's Desk

ASMFC Moves Forward with Sole Management Authority for Atlantic Cobia  
page 3

### Species Profile

Winter Flounder  
page 4

### Comings & Goings

page 6

### Science Highlight

Fisheries Collaborations with the U.S. Geological Survey  
page 9

### On the Legislative Front

page 10

### ACCSP

APAIS Tablet Developed to Expedite Data Processing  
page 11

## ASMFC Summer Meeting

August 7-9, 2018

The Westin Crystal City  
1800 South Eads Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## Final Agenda

*The agenda is subject to change. 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 7

8 – 10 a.m.

### Executive Committee

*(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Commissioners and Committee members only)*

- Public Comment
- Consider Changes to the Appeals Process (*J. McNamee*)
- Update on Right Whale Lawsuit (*R. Beal*)
- Update on Federal Appropriations (*R. Beal*)
- Discuss the Commission's Role in Aquaculture Activities (*R. Beal, L. Daniel*)
- Discuss Development and Use of Ecosystem Reports (*T. Kerns*)
- Review White Paper on Future Scope of Recreational Data Collection Programs (*R. Beal, M. Cahall*)

10:15 a.m. – Noon

### Atlantic Herring Section

- Public Comment
- Review and Consider Approval of the 2018 Atlantic Herring Benchmark Assessment (SAW 65) **Action**
  - Presentation of Stock Assessment (*M. Cieri*)
  - Presentation of Peer Review Report (*P. Campfield*)
  - Consider Acceptance of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for Management Use
- Discuss Recent New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) Recommendation to NOAA Fisheries on the 2018 Sub-Annual Catch Limits (*M. Ware*)
  - Reconsider the ASMFC 2018 Sub-Annual Catch Limits **Final Action**
- Provide Recommendations to NEFMC for 2019-2021 Fishery Specifications (*M. Ware*)

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

### NOAA Fisheries Presentation on Revised Recreational Catch Histories Resulting from Changes to the Marine Recreational Information Program Survey

*continued, see SUMMER MEETING FINAL AGENDA on page 6*

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N • Arlington, Virginia 22201 • [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org)

## 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.*

### Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY)  
Chair

Patrick C. Keliher (ME)  
Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal  
Executive Director

Patrick A. Campfield  
Science Director

Toni Kerns  
ISFMP Director

Laura C. Leach  
Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor  
Director of Communications  
tberger@asmfc.org

703.842.0740 Phone  
703.842.0741 Fax  
www.asmfc.org  
info@asmfc.org

#### **August 7 - 9**

ASMFC Summer Meeting, Westin, 1800 South Eads Street, Arlington, VA

#### **August 8 (12:30 - 1:30 p.m.)**

Atlantic Herring Days Out Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2018/atlantic-herring-days-out-conf-call/1256> for more details

#### **August 14 - 18**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, 3001 Atlantic Avenue, Virginia Beach, VA

#### **August 14 (begins at 9 a.m.) - 16 (ends at 3 p.m.)**

Northern Shrimp Stock Assessment Review Workshop, Residence Inn Portland Downtown Waterfront, 145 Fore Street, Portland, ME

#### **August 19 - 23**

148th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society: Communicating the Science of Fisheries Conservation to Diverse Audiences, Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, NJ

#### **August 30 (10 a.m. - 1 p.m.)**

Ecological Reference Point Work Group; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/8/2018/ecological-reference-point-work-group-conf-call/1252> for more details

#### **September 10 (1 - 3 p.m.)**

American Lobster Technical Committee Webinar; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/9/2018/american-lobster-technical-committee-webinar/1257> for more details

#### **September 11 - 14**

Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment Workshop, ASMFC, 1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA

#### **September 17 - 21**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Town and Country Inn, 2008 Savannah Highway, Charleston, SC

#### **September 25 & 26**

ACCSP Operations Committee and Advisory Committee, Hampton Inn and Suites, 603 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, GA

#### **September 25 - 27**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel 1620, Plymouth, MA

#### **October 2 - 4**

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Congress Hall, 200 Congress Place, Cape May, NJ

#### **October 21 - 25**

ASMFC 77<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, The Roosevelt Hotel, 45 East 45th Street and Madison Avenue, New York City, NY

#### **December 3 - 7**

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hilton Garden Inn/Outer Banks, 5353 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Kitty Hawk, NC

#### **December 4 - 6**

New England Fishery Management Council, Hotel Viking, Newport, RI



### ASMFC Moves Forward with Sole Management Authority for Atlantic Cobia

Last year, the Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia\* (also known as Atlantic cobia). The FMP, which complements many aspects of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's cobia regulations for federal waters, was initiated in response to recent overages of the federal annual catch limit (ACL) for Atlantic cobia. Management through a coastwide ACL resulted in overages for the recreational fishery in 2015 and 2016 and the commercial fishery in 2015, 2016, and 2017, disrupting fishing opportunities and potentially impacting the health of the stock. Because the Magnuson-

Stevens Act is not particularly suited to management for Atlantic cobia's migratory patterns, the resource and its users are better served with management under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

As part of its discussion during the development, approval, and implementation of the FMP, the Commission's South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board agreed sole management of Atlantic cobia by the Commission would provide the greatest flexibility to the states in managing a predominantly inshore fishery.

Further, the shift to Commission management would relieve the federal management bodies from developing measures to support state-specific actions, including maintaining a federal FMP and monitoring the ACL. In May 2017, the Board recommended the Commission send a letter to the Councils requesting the transfer of management authority from the federal government to the Commission.

In May 2018, the Board initiated development of an amendment to the interstate FMP, which would reflect the transfer in management responsibility, establish management in the absence of federal management measures such as ACLs (potentially through a harvest specification process), and recommend management measures to be implemented by NOAA Fisheries for federal waters. A Public Information

Document, which is the first step in the development of a new FMP or amendment, will be considered by the Board for approval and release for public comment in August.

In June 2018, in response to the Commission's request on transferring management authority, the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils approved Amendment 31 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plan (CMP FMP) for Secretarial approval. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the Amendment removes Atlantic cobia from the CMP FMP and transfers sole management responsibility of the resource to the Commission.

While the Commission is gearing up to assume management responsibility for Atlantic cobia through development of a new amendment, efforts are currently underway to assess the status of the stock through a SEDAR-conducted benchmark assessment and peer review. The first issue to be tackled is the management boundary of the stock, which, as of the 2013 stock assessment, was set adjacent to the Florida/Georgia state line. In June, a Cobia Stock Identification Workshop was held to review cobia stock structure and consider whether changes were required. Several new data sources were considered including additional genetic studies, updated conventional tagging analyses, and new telemetry and satellite tagging data. Preliminary Workshop results suggest a change in the management boundary for cobia is not warranted. Based on this finding, the Commission's management of cobia will be limited to the stock north of the Florida/Georgia line. These results will be incorporated in the benchmark stock assessment, which is scheduled to be completed, peer-reviewed, and released for Commission use in the fall of 2019.

The assessment results will set the stage for future management of Atlantic cobia. While the Commission and states will assume management of Atlantic cobia, we will continue to work closely with the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office and South Atlantic Council on management and stock assessment activities to ensure the sustainable management of the cobia resource throughout its Atlantic coast range.

\* The majority of Atlantic cobia are harvested in state waters, within three miles of shore in North Carolina and Virginia. They can also be found offshore and are found more in federal waters off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina as they migrate northward to spawn. Cobia harvested along the east coast of Florida are considered part of the Gulf of Mexico stock and are managed separately.

... sole management of Atlantic cobia by the Commission would provide the greatest flexibility to the states in managing a predominantly inshore fishery.

# Species Profile: Winter Flounder

## While Harvest Has Declined, Assessments Shows Little Improvement in Biomass

### Introduction

Stock assessments for the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA) and Gulf of Maine (GOM) winter flounder stocks were conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center as a part of a series of operational assessments which reviewed 19 Northeast groundfish stocks. Results of the assessments show the SNE/MA stock continues to be overfished, with low biomass since the 1990s. The biomass status of the GOM stock could not be determined due to model limitations, however, overfishing is not occurring. While management has responded to previous, yet similar, assessment results with trip limits and size restrictions in state waters, as well as quotas in federal waters, trends in these winter flounder stocks do not show clear responses to declines in fishing mortality.

### Life History

Winter flounder is an estuarine flatfish found in almost all shoal water habitats along the Northwest Atlantic coast. The geographic distribution ranges from nearshore habitats to offshore fishing banks. The name 'winter' flounder refers to the species' annual spawning migrations into nearshore waters in the winter. Adults migrate in two phases: an autumn estuarine immigration prior to spawning, and a late spring/summer movement to either deeper, cooler portions of estuaries or to offshore areas after spawning. This pattern of seasonal distribution may change in the northern extent of the range where they migrate to shallow water in the summer and deeper waters in the winter.

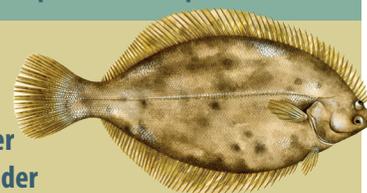
The annual spawning period varies geographically, with peak spawning times generally occurring earlier in southern locations. During spawning, females release demersal (negatively or neutrally buoyant) adhesive eggs whose properties facilitate retention within spawning grounds. Many factors influence larval growth and survival, including temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, and food availability. Nursery habitat for larvae and juveniles is typically littoral (along the shore) and sublittoral saltwater coves, coastal salt ponds, estuaries, and protected embayments; although larvae and juveniles have also been found in open ocean areas such as Georges Bank and Nantucket shoals. Larvae are predominantly found in the upper reaches of estuaries in early spring, moving into the lower estuary later in the season.

Adult growth rates vary between stock units. Fish from the offshore Georges Bank stock typically grow faster and larger than fish from the inshore areas. Maximum age appears to decrease from north to south over the winter flounder's range as well.

Estuarine habitat plays an essential role in all stages of winter flounder life history. Specifically, it provides spawning and foraging areas for adults, and nursery habitat and food sources for juveniles. Young-of-the-year (YOY) winter flounder and juveniles reside permanently in the estuaries while adults may leave estuaries during warm summer months. While estuaries provide good habitat for spawning, predatory and competitive interactions may occur frequently due to the high number of organisms found in these areas. Additionally, the nearshore grounds are vulnerable to water pollution and habitat loss.

Tagging studies have shown spawning-site fidelity in winter flounder, meaning that individuals will often return to the location where they were hatched, or close by. This suggests that sub-populations of winter flounder may be vulnerable to localized depletion.

### Species Snapshot



#### Winter Flounder

*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*

**Common Names:** blackback, lemon sole, flat fish, mud dab, black flounder

**Management Unit:** Maine to Delaware

**Family:** Pleuronectidae are also known as righteye flounders because most species lie on the sea bottom on their left sides, with both eyes on their right sides. Winter flounder is one of 60 species in this family.

#### Interesting Facts

- Generally, the darkest of all Gulf of Maine flat fishes.
- Winter flounder grow largest in Georges Bank and smallest in the Gulf of Maine.
- High site fidelity (attachment to specific sites) creates potential for local extinction.
- Winter flounder are born with an eye on each side of its head; as it develops, the left eye migrates across its head to the right side of the body.

**Maximum Size:** Adult winter flounder may grow as large as 70 cm (27.6 inches) and reach ages of 15+ years

#### Stock Status:

- *Gulf of Maine* - Overfished status unknown and overfishing is not occurring
- *Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic* - Overfished and overfishing is not occurring



Photo (c) Cornell Cooperative Extension Eelgrass Program, [www.SeagrassLI.org](http://www.SeagrassLI.org)

Sources of natural mortality for winter flounder include predation, parasites, disease, and competition. Predatory fish such as striped bass, bluefish, and summer flounder, as well as birds, invertebrates, and marine mammals prey on larvae and juveniles. Atlantic cod, spiny dogfish, goosefish, and winter skate are the main predators of adult winter flounder.

The diet of winter flounder is limited by their small mouth size and reliance on sight to locate prey. Feeding occurs solely during the day but intensifies during ebbing and flooding tides. Adults feed mostly on small invertebrates, shrimp, clams, and worms. At night, winter flounder lie flat with their eye turrets retracted until sunrise.

### Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Historically valuable to commercial and recreational fishermen throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic, winter flounder fisheries are a fraction of what they once were. Total landings (commercial and recreational) in both areas peaked in the early 1980s at approximately 10 million pounds in the GOM and 36 million pounds in SNE/MA. Today, as a result of stringent regulations, landings in both areas are significantly reduced. In 2016, total landings in the GOM stock were 467,000 pounds while total landings in the SNE/MA stock were approximately 1.2 million pounds. Over the past five years, commercial harvest has accounted for about 90% of total fishing mortality.

#### Gulf of Maine

Otter trawls and gillnets are the primary commercial gear types in GOM winter flounder fishery. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, commercial landings fluctuated around 2.2 million pounds. In 1982, commercial landings peaked at just over 6 million pounds and then declined steadily to approximately 770,000 pounds in 1999. This decline may be attributed to extended spring closures in the GOM. Commercial landings have been below 1 million pounds since 2005, and were 414,000 pounds in 2016.

Recreational landings represent a significantly smaller portion of total harvest on the GOM stock. GOM recreational landings fluctuated between 1 and 3.5 million pounds in the early 1980s before declining below 200,000 pounds in 1991. From 1997 to 2007, recreational landings further dropped to below 100,000 pounds. An almost four-fold increase in recreational landings occurred from 2007 to 2008 when landings increased from approximately 57,300 to 227,000 pounds. 2016 GOM recreational landings were roughly 53,000 pounds.

#### Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

Otter trawls are the primary gear type used by commercial fishermen to catch winter flounder in the SNE/MA area. Commercial landings from the SNE/MA stock averaged 18.7 million pounds from 1964 to 1972 before declining to around 10.6 million pounds throughout the mid- to late 1970s. Landings increased in the early 1980s to a record high of 24.6 million pounds and then rapidly declined to

4.7 million pounds in 1994. For the next seven years, landings increased steadily and exceeded 10 million pounds in 2001. Commercial landings decreased for the next few years until settling between 2 and 3 million pounds from 2004 to 2008. In response to the poor condition of the stock, a moratorium in the SNE/MA fishery was implemented in federal waters between May 2009 and April 2013. Concurrently, a 50 pound commercial bycatch limit was implemented in state waters, and remains in place today. Following the federal moratorium, 2016 commercial landings in SNE/MA were 1.14 million pounds.

Most recreational landings in the SNE/MA stock occur between January and June. They were around 6 million pounds in the early 1980s, increasing to 12 million pounds in 1985, and then steadily declined to between 1-2 million pounds (with the exception of a couple years) from 1992 to 2001. Landings further decreased to less than 500,000 pounds in 2002 and below 300,000 in 2005; by 2010, landings fell to a historical low of roughly 62,000 pounds. Similar to the commercial SNE/MA landings, this decline is likely due to the retention prohibition in federal waters and 2 fish bag limit in state waters. In 2016, recreational landings were 73,000 pounds.

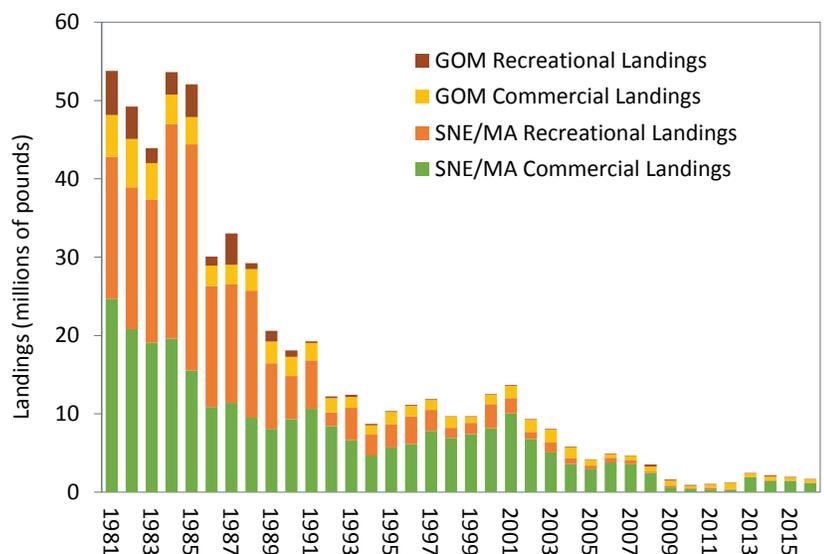
### Stock Status

#### Gulf of Maine

The 2017 GOM operational stock assessment indicates overfishing is not occurring and the stock biomass is unknown. The assessment uses area swept biomass from three different trawl surveys (Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Maine-New Hampshire, and Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries) to determine the exploitation rate and overfishing status; however, biomass reference points remain unknown and the overfished

*continued, see SPECIES PROFILE on page 8*

**Winter Flounder Commercial & Recreational Landings by Stock Unit**  
NEFSC Operational Assessment of 19 Groundfish Stocks, 2017



**3:30 – 5 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Postponed Motion from the May 2018 Board Meeting (*N. Meserve*) **Action**  
*Postponed Motion: "Move the Atlantic Menhaden Board recommend to the ISFMP Policy Board that the Commonwealth of Virginia be found out of compliance for not fully and effectively implementing and enforcing Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan if the State does not implement the following measure from section 4.3.7 (Chesapeake Bay Reduction Fishery Cap) of Amendment 3: The annual total allowable harvest from the Chesapeake Bay by the reduction fishery is limited to no more than 51,000 mt. Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Estes.*
- Elect Vice-Chair Action

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8**

**8 – 10:30 a.m. American Eel Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Update on Illegal Glass Eel Harvest in Maine (*P. Keliher, R. Cloutier*)
- Consider Addendum V for Final Approval **Final Action**
  - Review Options and Public Comment Summary (*K. Rootes-Murdy*)
  - Reports from the Law Enforcement Committee, Technical Committee, and Advisory Panel (*M. Robson, J. Zimmerman, M. DeLucia*)
  - Consider Final Approval of Addendum V
- Consider Maine Aquaculture Proposal **Action**
  - Maine Proposal for 2019 Fishing Season (*S. Rademaker, P. Keliher*)
  - Reports from the Law Enforcement Committee, Technical Committee, and Advisory Panel (*M. Robson, J. Zimmerman, M. DeLucia*)
- Update on North Carolina Aquaculture Plan: 2018 Fishing Season (*C. Batsavage*)

**10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Update on 5-Year Status Review of the Endangered Species Act Listing and Recovery Plan (*J. Crocker*)
- Review Technical Committee Report Regarding Highest Priority Data Sources for Stock Assessments (*K. Drew*) **Possible Action**
- Consider Approval of 2018 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports (*M. Appelman*) **Action**
- Review Recommendation to Disband the Advisory Panel (*T. Berger*) **Action**

**1 – 2:15 p.m. Coastal Sharks Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Draft Addendum V for Public Comment (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Action**

## Comings and Goings

### COMMISSIONERS

#### J. BRYAN PLUMLEE

In May, Virginia Governor Ralph S. Northam appointed Bryan Plumlee as the Commonwealth's Governor Appointee to the ASMFC. Since 1999, Mr. Plumlee has practiced law at Huff, Poole & Mahoney. Today, after Glen Huff was appointed to the Virginia Court of Appeals and the departure of Reeves Mahoney, the firm is named Poole Brooke Plumlee PC.



Mr. Plumlee has served on the Virginia Beach Wetlands Board, as well as the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Mr. Plumlee is active in his community and currently is President of the Virginia Beach Forum.

Born in Joplin, Missouri and raised in Kansas, Mr. Plumlee married Anne Standing of Virginia Beach in 1991. The same year, he received a B.A. in Political Science from North Carolina State University and earned his law degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1996. In 1999, Mr. Plumlee moved with his wife to Virginia Beach where they raised their two children. Welcome aboard, Mr. Plumlee!

#### SENATOR MONTY MASON

Also in May, Governor Ralph S. Northam appointed Senator Monty Mason as Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC. He replaces Senator Richard Stuart, who served in that position since 2011. Senator Mason represents Virginia's 1st Senate District. He has served in the State Senate since 2016, following three years with the Virginia House of Delegates.



Senator Mason serves on the following committees: Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources; General Laws and Technology; and Rehabilitation and Social Services. Senator Mason has been active in volunteering and supporting the community for nearly two decades. He currently serves on the Statewide Advisory Board for the Sorensen Institute of Political Leadership, The Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance Board, the Literacy for Life Advisory Panel, the Virginia Living Museum Board of Trustees, and the Executive Board for Smart Beginnings: Virginia Peninsula.

Senator Mason graduated from the College of William and Mary in 1989 and lives in Williamsburg with his wife Pamela, the Deputy Director of Compliance for the College of William and Mary, and their two daughters. Welcome aboard, Senator Mason!

- Update on NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Draft Amendment 11 (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)
- Discuss Best Practices for Safe Handling and Release of Coastal Sharks from Shore Sites (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)

**2:30 – 4:30 p.m. Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Update on Strategic Plan for Black Sea Bass Management (*C. Starks*)
- Consider Options for 2019 Black Sea Bass and Summer Flounder Recreational Management (*C. Starks, K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Possible Action**
- Consider Approval of 2018 Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance Reports for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass (*K. Rootes-Murdy, J. Kuesel*) **Action**

**4:45 – 5:30 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Approval of 2018 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports (*M. Appelman*) **Action**
- 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment Progress Update (*K. Drew*)
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9

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

- Public Comment
- Update from State Director’s Meeting and Executive Committee (*J. Gilmore*)
- Review Annual Performance of the Stocks (*T. Kerns*)
- Coordination Between ASMFC and NEFMC (*J. Gilmore*) **Possible Final Action**
  - Consider Changing the Atlantic Herring Section to a Management Board
- Update from the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (*L. Havel*)
- Update on the Risk and Uncertainty Policy (*J. McNamee*)
- Progress Update on Benchmark Stock Assessments
  - Shad (*J. Kipp*)
  - Horseshoe Crab (*K. Anstead*)
- Review Noncompliance Findings, If Necessary **Action**



**10:30 – 11 a.m. Business Session**

- Public Comment
- Review Noncompliance Findings, If Necessary **Final Action**

**11:15 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider 2018 Traffic Light Analyses for Atlantic Croaker and Spot (*C. McDonough*)
- Consider Postponed Motion from May 2018 Board Meeting (*P. Geer*) **Action**  
*Postponed Motion: “Move to initiate an addendum to the spot and croaker fishery management plans that incorporates the new traffic light analyses and management response to those analyses.” Motion made by Mr. Batsavage and seconded by Mr. Gary.*
- Update on Revised SEDAR 58 Schedule (*M. Schmidtke*)
- Review Cobia Technical Committee Report on Recreational Landings (*M. Schmidtke*)
- Consider Draft Public Information Document for Amendment 1 to the Cobia Fishery Management Plan for Public Comment (*M. Schmidtke*) **Action**
- Consider 2018 Fishery Management Plan Reviews and State Compliance Reports for Atlantic Croaker and Red Drum (*M. Schmidtke*) **Action**
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership (*T. Berger*) **Action**
- Elect Vice-Chair **Action**

status cannot be determined. One of the largest sources of uncertainty in the stock assessment is the survey gear catchability, which influences biomass and exploitation rate estimates.

A persistent challenge in assessing the GOM winter flounder stock is the apparent lack of response in survey abundance indices to significant declines in fishery removals. While recreational and commercial harvest has declined, survey indices have been relatively flat and there has been little change in the size structure of winter flounder caught.

### Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic

The 2017 SNE/MA operational stock assessment indicates the stock is overfished, but overfishing is not occurring. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) in 2016 was estimated to be 4,360 mt, which is 18% of the biomass target and 36% of the biomass threshold. The 2016 fishing mortality was estimated to be 0.21 which is 62% of the overfished threshold. A large source of uncertainty in the stock assessment is the estimate of natural mortality, which affects the scale of the biomass and fishery removal estimates.

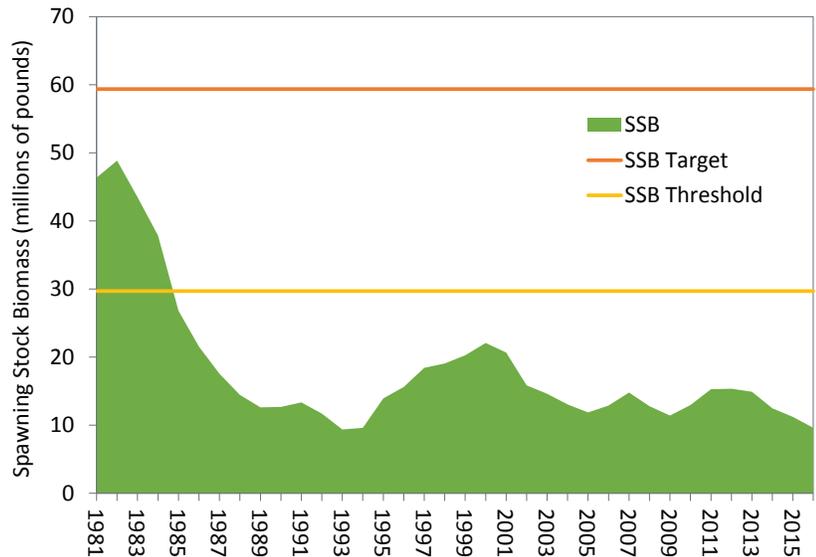
An interesting result of the 2017 stock assessment is that while SNE/MA SSB has generally decreased over the time series, recruitment has steadily increased since historic low levels in 2013. In fact, current recruitment estimates are above the 10 year average. Continued surveys and assessments will be needed to monitor this trend and determine its impact on the population.

### Atlantic Coastal Management

The Commission and the New England Fishery Management Council manage winter flounder with complementary management plans that regulate state and federal waters based on fisheries and the biology of winter flounder. The Council includes winter flounder as part of the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (Groundfish FMP), which includes several highly valuable commercial species, such as cod and yellowtail flounder. Federal management focuses on the commercial fishery because the bulk of harvest in federal waters is from that sector. The Commission's FMP is designed to protect spawning females (the most productive part of the population) when they migrate inshore because they are particularly vulnerable to harvest when congregated for spawning.

The Commission and Council use stock area-specific management measures for both the recreational and commercial sectors of the fishery. The variability in biology, as well as current and historical exploitation patterns, necessitate the delineation of stock units where growth, seasonal movement, and female maturity schedules are similar enough to be modeled as one group. Within these stock groups, winter flounder move across state boundaries, and between state and federal waters. Of

**Winter Flounder Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Spawning Stock Biomass**  
NEFSC Operational Assessment of 19 Groundfish Stocks, 2017



Timeline of Management Actions: FMP & Addendum I ('92); Addendum II ('98); Amendment 1 ('05); Addendum I ('09); Addendum II ('12); Addendum III ('13)

the three winter flounder management areas, the Commission participates in the management of the GOM and SNE/MA stocks.

The Commission significantly reduced fishing on state waters spawning grounds in 2005 when Amendment 1 was adopted. Amendment 1 established a minimum size limit, shortened seasons, and lowered trip/bag limits to reduce fishing pressure on spawning fish and rebuild spawning stock biomass. Amendment 1 complemented Amendment 13 and Framework 42 to the Groundfish FMP, which focused on offshore commercial fisheries (3 – 200 miles).

Considerable management changes occurred in 2009 following the 2008 peer-reviewed benchmark assessment, which estimated the SNE/MA stock at 9% of the target biomass. In federal waters, the Secretary of Commerce prohibited the retention of SNE/MA winter flounder through interim action. This moratorium was extended through the Council's Amendment 16 to the Groundfish FMP. In state waters, the Commission approved Addendum I, which reduced the SNE/MA commercial possession limit to 50 pounds and implemented a 2 fish bag limit in the recreational fishery. The Commission opted to establish a bycatch-only possession limit, rather than prohibit the possession of winter flounder in state waters, due to concerns about increased discard mortality and loss of fishery-dependent data. Addendum I also specified management changes for the GOM stock, requiring states to reduce recreational fishing mortality by 11% and established a 250 pound commercial trip limit.

continued, see SPECIES PROFILE on page 12

# Science Highlight: Fisheries Collaborations with the USGS

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) provides the public and decision makers reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life. As the principal science agency within the Department of Interior, USGS has a role under the Commission's Compact and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act to serve as a primary research agency for the Commission, in cooperation with state fisheries agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA Fisheries.

The USGS Fisheries Program has specific responsibilities to provide actionable research and technology to inform the conservation and management of fisheries resources with emphasis on imperiled, migratory, and interjurisdictional fishes and their associated habitats. Habitats and species ranges include headwater streams, large rivers, and estuaries.

The USGS Fisheries Program has contributed to Commission initiatives in the past. The horseshoe crab Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) framework is a decision support tool used to set crab harvest levels while maintaining sufficient crab egg abundances as forage for migratory birds. USGS scientists developed the ARM model and have contributed to horseshoe crab stock assessments for several years.

Diadromous stocks have benefited from research and engineering work conducted by USGS fish passage experts. Scientists at the USGS S.O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Laboratory in Massachusetts

have contributed to several projects within the Commission's Fish Passage Working Group, such as technical guidance for fishway designs tailored to shad, eel, and other diadromous species (<http://www.asmf.org/habitat/fish-passage>).

USGS National Fish Health Research Lab scientists previously contributed to the understanding of the causation and biological mechanism of Mycobacteriosis among Chesapeake Bay striped bass. USGS scientists conduct health assessments incorporating traditional analysis methods and next generation sequencing for early detection of emerging diseases or gene expression changes to identify stress in fish which can result from changing water temperatures, expanding migration distances, and introduction of contaminants prior to apparent and visible signs of distress.

Most recently, USGS geneticists provided new information on the population structure of Atlantic sturgeon throughout the U.S. portion of the species' range. The genetics research was used in the 2017 coastwide stock assessment and is being considered by NOAA Fisheries as part of its ongoing review of Atlantic sturgeon's threatened or endangered species status.

Leadership at the USGS Leetown Science Center and national headquarters is strengthening its collaboration with the Commission by expanding its scientific support to diadromous and coastal fisheries research, stock assessment, and habitat restoration. Scientists from USGS Cooperative Research Units in North Carolina, Maine, West Virginia, and the



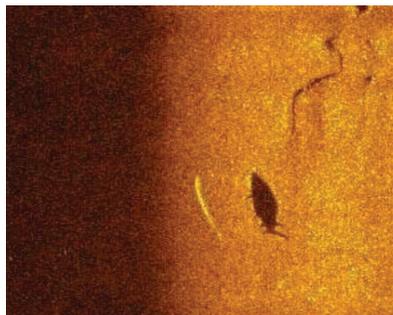
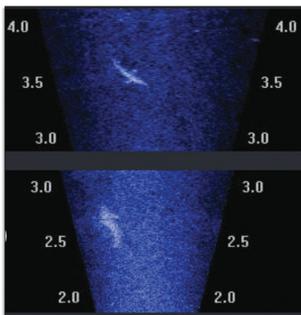
Science Center participate as analysts on Commission stock assessment and technical committees for shad, striped bass, horseshoe crab, eel, and sturgeon. USGS bio-geographers and habitat ecologists are contributing to habitat assessments and decision support tools to prioritize future fish habitat restoration projects of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.

In addition to personnel support, USGS recently secured more than \$500,000 of funding to support research projects starting in 2019 that will address Commission research priorities. The new projects will focus on sturgeon telemetry tagging, fishway entrance design, eel migration, and horseshoe crab survival and movement.

The new research projects and increased participation by USGS scientists on Commission committees are major steps towards enhancing the partnership between the two organizations. We plan to build on the partnership in the years ahead. For more information on USGS fisheries research initiatives, contact Tom O'Connell, Director, USGS Leetown Science Center, at [toconnell@usgs.gov](mailto:toconnell@usgs.gov), 304.724.4401, or visit [www.lsc.usgs.gov](http://www.lsc.usgs.gov) and [www.usgs.gov/ecosystems/cooperative-research-units](http://www.usgs.gov/ecosystems/cooperative-research-units).

For more information on Commission science initiatives, contact Pat Campfield, Fisheries Science Director at [pcampfield@asmfc.org](mailto:pcampfield@asmfc.org), 703.842.0726.

Examples of Collaborative Efforts (left to right): Images 1 & 2 - Atlantic sturgeon captured on sonar (c) USGS, North Carolina Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; an American eel fish passage ladder (c) New York Power Authority; and red knots and horseshoe crabs (c) Gregory Breese, USFWS





## House of Representatives Approves Magnuson-Stevens Act Revisions with Support from Commercial and Recreational Interests

H.R. 200 – the “Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act” is a comprehensive update and reauthorization of the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). It was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 11, 2018 by a vote of 222-193. The legislation was subsequently referred to the U.S. Senate for further consideration. Nine Democrats voted in favor of H.R. 200, including Atlantic coast Representatives Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ), while 15 Republicans opposed the bill.

H.R. 200 was penned by one of the MSA’s four original authors, Rep. Don Young (R-AK). Priorities from recreational groups and manufacturers, particularly in the Southeast and Gulf of Mexico, were incorporated into H.R. 200 in December 2017. These priorities were spearheaded by Rep. Garrett Graves (R-LA) through H.R. 2023 – the “Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017.” H.R. 200 has generally drawn support from commercial and recreational groups and opposition from conservation groups and the commercial red snapper industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

H.R. 200’s most contentious provisions include relaxing the ten year time-frame for rebuilding depleted fish stocks and allowing use of alternative rebuilding strategies (Section 303); changes to annual catch limit requirements (Sections 204); and significant recreational reforms

*continued, see ON THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT on page 12*

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (in \$ thousands)						
	2016 Enacted	2017 Enacted	2018 Enacted	2019 Trump Request	2019 House Report	2019 Senate Report
<b>Protected Resources Science and Management</b>						
Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles & Other Species	110,246	111,342	113,342	108,460	113,500	125,719
Species Recovery Grants	6,000	6,200	7,000	5,993	5,993	8,000
Atlantic Salmon	6,163	6,224	6,224	6,218	6,224	6,500
Pacific Salmon	60,000	62,000	63,000	60,944	67,000	63,000
<b>Total, Protected Resources Science and Management</b>	<b>182,409</b>	<b>185,766</b>	<b>189,566</b>	<b>181,615</b>	<b>192,717</b>	<b>203,219</b>
<b>Fisheries Science and Management</b>						
Fisheries and Ecosystem Science Programs and Services	139,489	139,489	144,196	141,185	144,196	148,427
Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys and Assessments	163,271	164,000	164,749	156,558	165,249	170,909
Observers and Training	43,655	43,655	53,955	43,768	43,955	53,955
Fisheries Management Programs and Services	115,995	117,051	118,659	112,598	112,643	121,116
Aquaculture	6,300	9,300	15,000	9,327	15,000	15,000
Salmon Management Activities	31,500	33,500	35,500	31,524	37,000	37,543
Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions	33,470	34,254	35,871	34,495	37,000	40,175
Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants	3,000	3,004	3,004	0	3,500	3,365
<b>Total, Fisheries Science and Management</b>	<b>536,680</b>	<b>544,253</b>	<b>570,934</b>	<b>529,455</b>	<b>558,543</b>	<b>590,490</b>
<b>Enforcement</b>	<b>69,000</b>	<b>69,000</b>	<b>69,073</b>	<b>51,495</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>69,796</b>
<b>Habitat Conservation and Restoration</b>	<b>61,408</b>	<b>52,524</b>	<b>53,384</b>	<b>47,919</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>61,384</b>
<b>Total, National Marine Fisheries Service</b>	<b>849,497</b>	<b>851,543</b>	<b>882,957</b>	<b>810,484</b>	<b>875,260</b>	<b>924,889</b>
<b>Other Line NOAA Line Items of Note</b>						
Coastal Zone Management Grants	26,000	85,000	75,000	0	75,000	110,000
Marine Protected Areas/National Marine Sanctuaries	49,000	51,000	54,500	49,739	57,500	54,500
National Estuarine Research Reserve System	23,000	23,500	25,000	0	27,000	27,500
<b>above FY18, below FY18, &gt;10% change</b>						

# ACCSP: APAIS Tablet Developed to Expedite Data Processing



APAIS interviewer with anglers (c) NOAA Fisheries

Since assuming responsibility for coordinating state conduct of the Marine Recreational Information Program Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) back in 2016, ACCSP has collaborated with state and federal partners on efforts to streamline survey conduct and data processing, with the ultimate goal of providing timelier, more accurate data for recreational estimates. ACCSP's Recreational Technical Committee members had a chance to view the latest product of this effort when they were presented with an APAIS tablet prototype at its June meeting. The accompanying graphic shows the various steps APAIS interviewers will follow to enter angler intercept data.

Intended for deployment in the 2019 fishing season, the tablet will enable state APAIS interviewers to record and transmit angler intercept data electronically, rather than on paper forms. The tablet features built-in logic that hinders introduction of errors during data entry. Electronic data transmission will eliminate time spent on shipping and scanning paper forms, reducing ACCSP's processing time by two to three weeks. This will provide state partners with additional time to review edits and perform final data checks before the data are submitted to NOAA Fisheries at the end of the month. Moving to electronic data collection for APAIS will also address a priority item in the 2017 MRIP Implementation Plan.

Created through an ACCSP-funded project led by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council back in 2016, the tablet was first designed as a reporting tool to support dockside validation of charter logbooks in the South Atlantic. Through an iterative process of internal development and external field testing, the tablet is nearly complete for dockside assignments. This year, ACCSP funded a Rhode Island project proposal to add headboat at-sea data collection assignments and further develop the dockside reporting tablet.

The current iteration of the tablet received very positive feedback from Recreational Technical Committee members. Further modifications are planned before another round of field testing begins this fall. ACCSP and its state partners are aiming for full implementation by 2019.

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](http://www.accsp.org).

## Your Assignments Page

Unique to each APAIS interviewer, this page displays the interviewer's assignments over the month. On this page, the interviewer has the ability to select and upload assignments.

Selecting an assignment brings the interviewer to a screen from which s/he can access the sites, site details, and intercepts associated with that assignment. To view the associated intercepts, the user would tap the Intercepts tab.

Date	Time	Assignment	Code	Count
Mon 8/06/18	8AM - 2PM	Private Rental	37 - 055	4321915 (7263)
Sat 8/04/18	11AM - 5PM	Charterboat	37 - 129	3525136 (7263)
Fri 8/03/18	2PM - 8PM	Private Rental	37 - 055	4421887 (7263)
Thu 8/02/18	2PM - 8PM	Charterboat	37 - 055	3324250 (7263)
Wed 8/01/18	11AM - 5PM	Private Rental	37 - 129	4625743 (7263)
Tue 7/31/18	2PM - 8PM	Charterboat	37 - 031	3324294 (7263)

## Intercepts Associated with Assignment

This screen shot provides an example of what the interviewer might see upon selecting the Intercepts tab. To add an intercept, s/he would tap the person button at the bottom of the screen. This action opens what is essentially a navigable, digital version of the paper intercept form. The interviewer would then proceed with the interview, entering the participant's responses into the tablet as s/he goes.

Angler	Group	Date/Time	Count
Angler 5	(Group 1)	Fri 7/27/18 7:06 AM	35
Angler 4	(Group 1)	Fri 7/27/18 7:06 AM	35
Angler 3	(Group 1)	Fri 7/27/18 7:06 AM	35
Angler 2	(Group 1)	Fri 7/27/18 7:06 AM	35
ANGLER 1	(Group 1)	Fri 7/27/18 7:04 AM	35

## Available Catch

This screen shot depicts the screen showed when an angler agrees to show his/her available catch to the interviewer. The interviewer has the ability to record species, quantity, disposition, length and weight of the available catch via this screen.

Quantity: 4  
Species: BASS, STRIPED (00)  
Disposition: Eaten/plan to eat (3)  
Length (MM): 600  
Weight (KG): 3

including ‘alternative management measures’ and allocation review in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (Sections 202 and 203). A controversial section weakening the National Environmental Policy Act was dropped from the bill in December 2017.

H.R. 200 does not directly amend the Striped Bass Act or the Atlantic Coastal Act. However, it would affect ASMFC’s jointly managed fisheries. Two amendments to H.R. 200 approved on the House floor specifically impact ASMFC fisheries. The first, offered by Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R-ME), requires a report to Congress on all fees imposed on the American lobster fishing industry (Section 504). The second, offered by Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-NY), would lift the ban on striped bass fishing in a portion of the EEZ (Section 505).

### **Congress Advances Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations, Final Passage Complicated by Immigration Issues**

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, President Trump began the annual appropriations cycle by submitting his Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) Budget Request to Congress. Throughout March and April, congressional committees held hearings to examine the budget request, and by June 14<sup>th</sup>, both chambers’ Appropriations Committees had approved legislation funding federal marine fisheries programs. Immigration policy issues within the bill that funds the Commerce Department have put final passage of the legislation into question. When Congress returns from its August recess, it will have 11 legislative days to act before FY19 begins.

Detailed policy instructions and line-item funding levels are pro-

vided for all federal agencies through the annual appropriations process. For NOAA Fisheries in FY19, this information is contained in two reports: Senate Report 115–275 and House Report 115–704. Both reports reject the President’s proposal to eliminate funding for Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants, Joint Enforcement Agreements, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and Sea Grant. Further highlights from an ASMFC perspective include:

1. Striped Bass in the EEZ: H. Rpt. 115-704 requires NOAA to review the federal moratorium on Atlantic striped bass.
2. Virginia Tech Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl Survey: H. Rpt. 115-704 directs and S. Rpt. 115–275 encourages NOAA Fisheries to continue the Mid-Atlantic horseshoe crab trawl survey.
3. Regional Councils and Fishery Commissions Funding: S. Rpt. 115–275 provides \$40,175,000 for Councils and Interstate and International Commissions [including ACFCMA], and requires equal increases across Councils & Commissions.
4. Lobster/Right Whale – Gear, Enforcement and Research: S. Rpt. 115–275 encourages ongoing research into alternative lobster fishing gear, such as ropeless traps and reduced breaking-strength rope; continued collaboration between states, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Coast Guard to improve offshore lobster enforcement in the Northeast; and provides two million dollars [via Sea Grant] to address American lobster research priorities in the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank, and Southern New England, and one million dollars for research on and monitoring of right whales.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant, at [dtompkins@asmfc.org](mailto:dtompkins@asmfc.org).

### *SPECIES PROFILE continued from page 8*

While the Council’s Amendment 16 prohibited retention of SNE/MA winter flounder, it also drastically changed federal groundfish management by establishing sectors. Prior to sectors, effort was controlled by restricting the number of days a vessel was allowed to fish each year. Sectors are a catch share program where limited access permit holders formed “sectors” that receive an annual groundfish allocation based on the landings history of its members. Each sector creates its own rules to allocate catch to its members, avoid exceeding catch limits, and minimize discards which are counted against their allocation. A common pool sub-ACL was created for vessels that did not join a sector and their effort is controlled through days-at-sea allocations. A state sub-ACL accounts for catch in state waters by estimating expected catch by state-permitted fishermen. There are no accountability measures tied to the state sub-ACL, so if it is exceeded, other sub-ACL components may be reduced.

In 2011, an updated stock assessment concluded that the GOM winter flounder stock was no longer experiencing overfishing. In response, federal action was taken to significantly increase the GOM stock ACL. As a result, the Commission implemented Addendum II, increasing the commercial trip limit to 500 pounds and removing the requirement that states reduce their GOM recreational catch by 11%. In 2013, the federal moratorium on SNE/MA winter flounder was lifted and the stock was allocated and ACL. In contrast, the 50 pounds commercial possession limit remained in state waters due to the Commission’s concern about the continued low abundance of SNE/MA winter flounder.

Specifications for the 2018-2020 GOM and SNE/MA winter flounder fisheries were set via the Council’s Framework 57 action. The annual total ACL for the GOM stock was set at 428 mt, a 348 mt decrease from 2017. Likewise, the GOM state waters sub-component was decreased from 122 mt to 67 mt. For the SNE/MA stock, the total annual ACL was set at 700 mt, a 49 mt decrease from 2017. The state waters sub-component slightly increased from 70 mt to 73 mt.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org).