



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

2016 Winter Meeting Summary

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

2016 Winter Meeting
Alexandria, VA
February 2-4, 2016

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Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2016)

Press Release

ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Jonah Crab Draft Addendum I for Public Comment

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Lobster Management Board approved Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes changes to the incidental bycatch limits for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots). For non-trap gear, the Draft Addendum includes options to maintain, increase, or eliminate the bycatch limit, while options for non-lobster traps include establishing bycatch limits of varying size or maintaining no limit on these gears. The intent of the Draft Addendum is to cap incidental landings of Jonah crab while ensuring the inclusion of current participants in the Jonah crab fishery.

The FMP currently prescribes a 200 crab per calendar day/500 crab per trip incidental bycatch limit for non-trap gear; however, concerns were expressed over the appropriateness of these limits. Data submitted by the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries illustrate while 97-99% of trips from 2010 through 2014 were within the current limit, there were several trips above the limit. Furthermore, current bycatch landings were sufficiently low, accounting for approximately 0.1% of total landings.

Bycatch limits for non-lobster trap gear were added as a second issue for consideration in the Draft Addendum to address concerns regarding the lack of effort controls on non-lobster traps and the potential for trap proliferation. Data submitted by NOAA Fisheries show between May 1, 2013 and August 31, 2015, 194 trips landed Jonah crab with whelk pots, crab pots, and fish pots. Of these, 80 trips landed 100 crab or fewer and 115 trips landed 200 crab or fewer. Approximately 45 trips landed between 200 and 500 crab and 40 trips landed more than 450 crab. Landings from Maryland show between 2012 and 2015, 33 trips landed Jonah crab with fish pots. All of these trips were under 200 pounds. Reports also indicated from 2014-2015, 36 trips landed Jonah crab with whelk pots. Average landings per trip with whelk pots were under 500 pounds; however, there is concern that these whelk pot landings may in fact be rock crab, a closely related species which is often misreported as Jonah crab.

It is anticipated the states of Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and Maryland will be conducting public hearings on the Draft Addendum. The details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release. The Draft Addendum will be available on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org (under Public Input) by February 10th. Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Addendum either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on April 1, 2016** and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at mware@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Addendum I).

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PR01-16

Meeting Summary

The American Lobster Management Board met to discuss potential management measures to address the declining condition of the Southern New England (SNE) stock and to review aspects of the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP), including draft Addendum I which addresses incidental bycatch.

The Board reviewed the Technical Committee’s (TC) reports which responded to the tasks assigned at the November meeting. Projections of the SNE stock showed that, under the assumption of constant recruitment, a 90% reduction in fishing pressure would be needed to stabilize the stock. Under a more optimistic assumption that recruitment is coupled with spawning stock biomass, a 75% reduction in fishing pressure would be needed to

stabilize the stock. The TC report also showed evidence of connectivity between the inshore and offshore lobster stocks and confirmed that recent trends in fishery dependent and independent data do not show improvements in abundance or recruitment. The Board postponed, until the next meeting, a motion to initiate an addendum to explore management options which could stabilize or increase spawning stock biomass in order to provide time for additional analysis. The Board is specifically interested in further TC analysis on ways to increase egg production and the effects of changes in gauge size on spawning stock biomass. The TC will also review work by Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife on the relationship between fishing effort and fishing mortality. In the meantime, the Board tasked the American Lobster Plan Development Team with developing potential objectives and ways to achieve them for the SNE stock. Furthermore, given the TC's recommendation that there be 100% trip level reporting for all federally licensed vessels in order to increase data on catch composition, the Board will send a letter to NOAA Fisheries highlighting the importance of full reporting. A discussion on concerns surrounding the poor recruitment of lobster in the Gulf of Maine stock will occur in May.

In order to address concerns about incidental bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery, the Board approved Draft Addendum I for public comment. The Addendum was initiated in November 2015 to increase or remove the bycatch limit for non-trap gear. However, given concerns regarding the lack of effort controls on non-lobster traps and the potential for trap proliferation, the Board expanded the options in the Addendum to address bycatch by non-lobster trap gear. A press release will announce the availability of the document for public comment as well as public hearing dates and locations. Given that discussion on this issue is on-going, the Board decided to hold off implementing the FMP's regulation on bycatch in the Jonah crab fishery until after final action on Addendum I.

The Board also reviewed data on the Jonah crab claw fishery from the states of Maine, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. Overall, trip level data was inadequate to document the extent of the landings but did reveal claw landings by a variety of gears and permit holders. Biological data submitted by members of the TC showed the relationship between carapace width and claw height and length and could provide a useful alternative for management. Given that fishermen in other states are not included in the exemption outlined in the Jonah Crab FMP, the Board discussed the potential for a coastwide claw fishery as well as the elimination of the claw fishery. The Board will send a letter to NOAA Fisheries requesting advice on the legality of the current claw exemption given the desire for complementary measures in federal waters.

The Board received updates on the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) Deep-Sea Coral Amendment and the State/Federal Lobster Observer Programs. In response to a request by NEFMC for data on the distribution of lobster fishing effort in the offshore canyons, the Commission is working with the states to draft a survey for distribution to Area 3 fishermen. Progress has also been made to expand the sampling frame of the Federal Lobster Observer Program to include all federally permitted lobster fishermen, rather than only those who report with VTRs. Finally, the Board elected Steven Train (ME) as Board Vice-chair.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

Motions

Main Motion

Motion to begin a new addendum to address the declining lobster stock conditions in SNE/MA. The PDT with input from the LCMTs is instructed to explore the following alternatives:

- a. Analyzing the plans rebuilding targets & thresholds to account for current environmental conditions;**
- b. work to stabilize and increase SSB through changes in biological measures and work towards uniform measures among LCMA's within SNE/MA;**
- c. Improve permitting & accountability of SNE/MA lobster fisheries by requesting NMFS consider permit endorsement for Area 3 vessels fishing in SNE (west of 70 longitude);**
- d. Improve current management & compliance with lowered trap limits of nearshore trap fisheries by proposing a uniform closed season & new trap tag deadlines;**

- e. Accelerate trap allocation cuts that are already codified for the next 5 years in Areas 2 & 3;
- f. Recognize the SNE/MA trap fishery as a bona fide mixed crustacean fishery & develop strategies & policies that recognizes the multispecies nature of the catch.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend section b to read as follows:

- b. Work to stabilize & increase SSB through changes in management measures**

Motion made by Mr. Simpson and seconded by Mr. Miller. Motion carries.

Main Motion as Amended

Motion to begin a new addendum to address the declining lobster stock conditions in SNE/MA. The PDT with input from the LCMTs is instructed to explore the following alternatives:

- a. Analyzing the plans rebuilding targets & thresholds to account for current environmental conditions;
- b. Work to stabilize & increase SSB through changes in management measures;
- c. Improve permitting & accountability of SNE/MA lobster fisheries by requesting NMFS consider permit endorsement for Area 3 vessels fishing in SNE (west of 70 longitude);
- d. Improve current management & compliance with lowered trap limits of nearshore trap fisheries by proposing a uniform closed season & new trap tag deadlines;
- e. Accelerate trap allocation cuts that are already codified for the next 5 years in Areas 2 & 3; and
- f. Recognize the SNE/MA trap fishery as a bona fide mixed crustacean fishery & develop strategies & policies that recognizes the multispecies nature of the catch.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion postponed.

Motion to Postpone Main Motion as Amended

Move to postpone the main motion until such time that the Technical Committee can finalize the analysis that was tasked at the last board meeting, to allow time for Rhode Island to bring information to the Technical Committee, and to ensure that the Board develop a goal associated with the main motion for the future.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion carries.

Main Motion

Move to approve Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab FMP for public comment as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion postponed until Section discusses additional draft addendum items.

Motion to Postpone

Move to postpone the motion to after the Board considers additional items in the Addendum.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries without objection.

Move to include in Addendum I the option outlined in issue 2 of PDT memo with the inclusion of option C that would be a 1,000 crab per trip limit.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries.

Main Motion

Move to approve Draft Addendum I to the Jonah Crab FMP for public comment as modified today. Motion

made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion approved by consensus.

Main Motion

Move to initiate an addendum to create standards and management measures for a Jonah crab claw only fishery.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion postponed.

Motion to Postpone

Motion to postpone until the next meeting pending a General Counsel review by NOAA Fisheries.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion passes.

Move to nominate Stephen Train as Vice Chair to American Lobster Board.

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes.

ATLANTIC HERRING SECTION (FEBRUARY 2, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Herring Section met to review and consider final action on Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring. The Section selected final measures pertaining to spawning area closures, fixed gear set asides, and emptying fish holds prior to trip departures and recommended to the full Commission approval of the Amendment (see Business Session Meeting Summary for more information).

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to adopt *Option C. GSI-based forecast system for Section 4.2.6.1 - Spawning Area Closure Monitoring System*. This system would be implemented for one year and will then be reviewed by the Technical Committee and Section for effectiveness. If the GSI-based system is effective it can be continued either indefinitely or for a time-certain by a majority vote of the Herring Section. If the Section deems the GSI-based system to not be effective, the spawning area closure monitoring system will automatically revert to Option B.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to select under *Section 4.2.6.2* the trigger value of the 80th Percentile (GSI30 Trigger = 25), and default date of sub-option C2.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Stockwell. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to select option A status quo maintain the current spawning areas for section 4.2.6.3.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to select under *Section 4.2.6.4 Spawning Closure Period* option A status quo four weeks.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Stockwell. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to select under *Section 4.2.6.4 Spawning Closure Period for reclosure protocol* option B defined protocol.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Stockwell. Motion passes (6 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to select under *Section 4.2.7.2 Fixed Gear Set-Aside Provision* option A status quo.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion fails (2 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstentions).

Move to select under *Section 4.2.7.2 Fixed Gear Set-Aside Provision* option B.

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. Gibson. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to select under *Section 4.2.8 Empty Fish Hold Provision* option C1 federal state empty fish hold provision for select vessels.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Dr. Pierce. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to have an implementation date of June 1, 2016.

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes.

Move to recommend to the full Commission to approve Amendment 3 as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded by Mr. Train. Roll Call Vote: In Favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ.

Motion passes unanimously

SUMMER FLOUNDER, SCUP, AND BLACK SEA BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 2, 2016)

Press Release

ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board Approves Regional Management for 2016 Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Recreational Fisheries

Alexandria, VA –The Commission’s Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XXVII to the Summer Flounder and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan. The Addendum continues the use of regional management for the 2016 summer flounder and black sea bass recreational fisheries, with a modification to the summer flounder regions. The modified summer flounder regions are intended to provide more equity in recreational harvest opportunities along the coast, especially between New Jersey and Delaware in the Delaware Bay. The approved summer flounder regions are Massachusetts; Rhode Island; Connecticut through New York; New Jersey; Delaware through Virginia; and North Carolina. For black sea bass, the Board approved the continuation of management measures by northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina).

Addendum XXVII was initiated to address the discrepancy in management measures between New Jersey and Delaware in the Delaware Bay. In recent years, the difference in size limit, which has been as great as 2-inches, has been cited as having an economic impact on southern New Jersey anglers. The approval of the New Jersey Delaware Bay region will allow New Jersey to pursue, through its regulatory process, the following management measures for New Jersey waters west of the COLREGS line in the Delaware Bay: a 17-inch minimum size, 4 fish possession limit, and a 128 day season. For New Jersey anglers east of the COLREGS line and north along the New Jersey coast, the state will seek to maintain 2015 management measures in 2016, namely, a 18-inch minimum size, 5 fish possession limit, and a 128 day season. The latter measures are consistent with those of New York and Connecticut. Management measures for the remaining states remain unchanged from 2015. The adaptive regional management approach for summer flounder has been approved for the 2016 fishing year only.

For black sea bass, the Board approved the continuation of ad hoc regional management measures for the northern (Massachusetts – New Jersey) and southern regions (Delaware – North Carolina). This approach has been used since 2011 and offers some advantages over coastwide regulations, which can disproportionately impact states within the management unit. States in the northern region, which are responsible for approximately 97% of the total recreational harvest, will reduce their harvest by 23% to achieve the 2016 recreational harvest limit. Based on the recommendations of the Technical Committee, the Board approved management proposals and methodologies submitted by the northern states. The northern states will finalize their black sea bass management measures by the spring of 2016.

States in the southern region will implement measures consistent with federal regulations (current recommended federal measures are a 12.5 inch TL minimum fish size, 15 fish possession limit, and open season

from May 15 – September 21 and October 22 – December 31). Combined, the regulations of the two regions are expected to achieve the required coastwide harvest reduction in order to not exceed the 2016 recreational harvest limit. The Board approved the ad hoc regional measures approach for the 2016 fishing year with the option of extending it through 2017 by Board action.

The Board also approved the maintenance of 2015 scup recreational measures for the 2016 fishing season. Addendum XXVII will be available on the Commission website by the end of February 2016. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR16-03

Motions

Main Motion

Move to approve Option 2: Ad-Hoc Regional Measures for Black Sea Bass under Section 3.2 and Option 2: one year extension through 2017 under Section 3.2.1 in Addendum XXVII.

Motion made by Mr. Simpson and seconded by Mr. Heins.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend under section 3.2.1 option 1: no extension beyond 2016.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. O'Reilly. Motion fails (5 in favor, 7 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to approve Option 2: Ad-Hoc Regional Measures for Black Sea Bass under Section 3.2 and Option 2: one year extension through 2017 under Section 3.2.1 in Addendum XXVII.

Motion made by Mr. Simpson and seconded by Mr. Heins. Motion passes (13 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to approve the black sea bass proposals and methodologies for use in 2016 management as recommended by the Technical Committee, however no state may have more open days in any mode in 2016 than in 2015.

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion fails (1 in favor, 8 opposed, 4 abstentions).

Move to approve the black sea bass proposals and methodologies for use in 2016 management as recommended by the technical committee.

Motion made by Mr. Gibson and seconded by Mr. Heins. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to nominate Bob Ballou as Vice-Chair to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board. Motion made by Mr. Heins and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motion passes unanimously.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Executive Committee met to consider changes to various Commission guidance documents (Compact, Rules and Regulations, and ISFMP Charter) to reflect changes in the operation of Commission business practices over time as well as ensure consistency among its guidance documents. The Committee finalized its recommendations for changes to these documents to be considered and acted upon by the ISFMP Policy Board and Business Session later this week.

The Committee establishing a Funding Subcommittee to develop strategies and messaging to secure funding for state research and management priorities. This Subcommittee will meet following the State Directors Meeting in

early March. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at lleach@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board initiated the development of Draft Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. The Draft Addendum proposes allowing two individuals who are each authorized by their management jurisdiction to harvest 6,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch to harvest up to 12,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch when working from the same vessel fishing stationary, multi-species gear - limited to one vessel trip per day. The Addendum for public comment will be drafted by the Plan Development Team for the Board's review at its May meeting. If approved for comment, a public comment period would occur over the summer, and the Board would consider taking final action on the draft Addendum at its August meeting.

The Board also clarified the timeline of Amendment 3 development. The Amendment will consider both ecosystem reference points (ERPs) and revisit allocation. As the first step in the amendment process, a public information document will be developed to scope both allocation options and available ERPs in late 2016/early 2017, followed by a Draft Amendment document in mid-2017 for potential implementation of final measures in 2018.

The reason for the extended timeframe is to provide the opportunity to conduct a socioeconomic analysis to further characterize the Atlantic menhaden fishery. The socioeconomic analysis will be conducted through a contractor with the goal of providing much needed information on the importance of menhaden to its stakeholders to help inform allocation discussions. The socioeconomic analysis will be conducted throughout 2016 and will rely on stakeholder engagement to obtain socioeconomic data to conduct the analysis.

Lastly, the Board discussed the timeline for setting the 2017 fishery specifications. Given compliance reports are not due until April, the Board decided to wait until August 2016 to set 2017 specifications so that the 2015 landings could be incorporated into updated stock projections. The Board intends to review the stock projection methodology at its May meeting to provide guidance to the Technical Committee for completing the updated projections for August.

For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to initiate an addendum to allow two individuals who are each authorized by their management jurisdiction to harvest 6,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch to harvest 12,000 pounds of menhaden bycatch when working from the same vessel fishing stationary, multi-species gear - limited to one vessel trip per day.

Motion made by Ms. Fegley and seconded by Dr. Daniel. Motion carries unanimously.

ATLANTIC STURGEON MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Sturgeon Management Board met to (1) receive an update on the 2017 benchmark stock assessment, (2) consider approval of two nominations for the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS), (3) receive an overview of the NOAA Fisheries Critical Habitat Designation process as mandated by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), (4) consider approval of the 2016 Fishery Management Plan (FMP) review, and (5) elect a Vice-Chairman.

The benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for review in early 2017 and is expected to be completed on schedule. The Stock Assessment Subcommittee and its working groups, along with ASMFC Staff, have successfully acquired all available bycatch data from Atlantic coast fisheries that encounter sturgeon, as well as the majority of acoustic telemetry data from state and academic researchers and other available fishery-independent data. Additionally, genetic analysis of acoustically tagged fish is currently underway, the results of which will be used to develop mortality estimates at the DPS-level. Following the update, the Board approved the SAS membership of Jared Flowers' (NC DMF), for his expertise with telemetry modeling and sturgeon research, and David Kazyak's (U.S.GS, Leetown Science Center) for his experience with genetic datasets and research on the Hudson River Atlantic Sturgeon population.

Kim Damon-Randall (NOAA) presented an overview of the process for designating critical habitat for Atlantic sturgeon as required by Section 4(b)(2) of the ESA. Essentially, the multi-tiered process identifies areas along the Atlantic coast that meet the definition of critical habitat (as defined by the ESA) and considers the economic impacts of designating any particular areas as critical habitat to determine which areas should be included in the final rule. Biological information and economic analysis were peer-reviewed by Sturgeon Technical Committee members and economic experts, respectively. Following a 90 day public comment period, two final rules, one for each Regional Fishery Management Office jurisdiction, are expected to publish by May 27, 2016. NOAA Fisheries will present a summary of the final rules to the Board at its August meeting.

Lastly, the Board approved the 2016 FMP Review of the 2013 and 2014 fishing years, and elected Dr. Louis Daniel as Board Vice-Chair. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.84.-0740.

Motions

Move to approve Jared Flowers and David Kazyak to the Sturgeon Stock Assessment Subcommittee.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to nominate Louis Daniel for Sturgeon Vice-chairman.

Motion made by Mr. Gary and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion passes.

Motion to approve the 2016 FMP review for the 2013 and 2014 fishing years.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion carries without objection.

SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Press Release

ASMFC Spiny Dogfish Board Approves 2016/2017 Specifications

Alexandria, VA – The Commission's Spiny Dogfish Management Board approved a spiny dogfish commercial quota of 40,360,761 pounds for the 2016/2017 fishing season (May 1 – April 30). Although this represents a 20% reduction in quota from 2015/2016, landings have been below 24 million pounds for the past two fishing years. The Board set commercial trip limits at 5,000 pounds in state waters (0-3 miles from shore) in the northern region (Maine through Connecticut). Both measures are consistent with the quota and trip limit recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils. The Board also approved an increase in the northern area trip limit to 6,000 pounds contingent on complementary action in federal waters. The Board will send a letter to NOAA Fisheries to request it consider and implement these measures.

State-specific Spiny Dogfish Commercial Shares for the Northern Region and Southern States (New York through North Carolina)

	Northern Region (ME-CT)	NY	NJ	DE	MD	VA	NC
Possession Limit	5,000*	To be specified by the individual southern region states					
% Allocation	58.000%	2.707%	7.644%	0.896%	5.920%	10.795%	14.036%
2016/2017	23,409,241	1,092,566	3,085,177	361,632	2,389,357	4,356,944	5,665,036

Notes: (1) *If trip limits are increased to 6,000 pounds in federal waters then this value will also increase to 6,000 pounds; (2) any overages from the previous fishing seasons will be paid back by the region or state in the following season, as has been done in years past.

The Board reviewed the revised 2015 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment Update, which concludes spiny dogfish are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be 106% of the target. In order to overcome the data gap resulting from the incomplete 2014 survey, the Mid-Atlantic Council’s Science and Statistical Committee used a Kalman Filter for the update. This was the best approach because it provided the most stable estimates of survey abundance and hence catch advice.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR16-05

Motions

Move to adopt a spiny dogfish 2016 commercial quota of 40,360,761 pounds which is consistent with the commercial quota recommended to NOAA Fisheries by the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Reid. Motion carries without objection, with one abstention from NOAA Fisheries.

Move to recommend NOAA Fisheries adopt a 6000 pound trip limit, if the trip limit is approved in federal waters then set a 6000 pound trip limit in the northern region (ME through CT). If the trip limit is not approved in federal waters then a 5,000 pound trip limit will remain in the northern region (ME through CT).

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. White. Motion carries with one abstention from NOAA Fisheries.

Move to nominate Rob O’Reilly as Vice-Chair of the Spiny Dogfish Board.

Motion made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Heins. Motion carries.

COASTAL SHARKS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Press Release

**ASMFC Coastal Sharks Board Sets Smoothhound Commercial Quota & Implements State-shares
Board Initiates Addendum to Establish At-sea Fin Removal Provision**

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Sharks Management Board approved a commercial quota of 1,201.7 mt dressed weight (dw) for smoothhound sharks (also known as smooth dogfish in the Atlantic) and

implemented state-shares for the allocation of the coastwide quota, pursuant to the provisions of Addendum II to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Coastal Sharks. The Board’s action responds to NOAA Fisheries’ final approval of Amendment 9 to the 2006 Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, which brings smoothhound sharks under federal management effective March 15, 2016.

NOAA Fisheries will close the federal waters fishery when smoothhound shark landings are expected to reach 80% of the coastwide quota. However, fishermen with a state commercial fishing license can continue to harvest smoothhound in state waters until the allotted state share is projected to have been harvested.

State-specific quota overages in a fishing year will be deducted from the corresponding state quota in the subsequent fishing season. Two or more states, under mutual agreement, may transfer or combine their smoothhound shark quota. Unused quota may not be rolled over from one fishing year to the next.

State-shares of Smoothhound Sharks Coastwide Quota

State	% Share	State Allocation Dressed Weight (mt)	State Allocation Dressed Weight (lbs)
ME	0.021%	0.25	551
MA	0.433%	5.20	11,464
RI	1.363%	16.38	36,111
CT	0.234%	2.81	6,195
NY	7.953%	95.57	210,694
NJ	18.828%	226.26	498,813
DE	0.339%	4.07	8,973
MD	6.703%	80.55	177,581
VA	34.803%	418.23	922,030
NC	28.583%	343.48	757,236
SC	0.742%	8.90	19,621
TOTAL	100%	1,201.7	2,649,268

In addition to other provisions related to the removal of smoothhound shark fins at sea, Amendment 9 requires smoothhound sharks to make up at least 25% of the retained catch in order for fishermen to be able to remove their fins while at sea. Fishermen may retain other sharks on board provided the fins of other shark species remain naturally attached to the carcass through offloading. Since a catch composition requirement is not currently in the Interstate FMP, the Board initiated Draft Addendum IV to the FMP to ensure consistency between state and federal regulations. The Board will review the Draft Addendum and consider approving it for public comment at the Commission’s Spring Meeting in May.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR16-06

Motions

Move to initiate an addendum to the coastal sharks FMP to address a disconnect of the processing at sea.

Commercial fisherman can fully dress (remove head and fin and gut at sea) smooth dogfish if at least 25% of retained catch is smooth dogfish.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Muffley. Motion passes (14 in favor).

Move to adopt the 2016 smoothhound (smooth dogfish) quota of 1201.7 metric tons (2.6 million lbs dw).

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Dr. Daniel. Roll Call Vote: In Favor - MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, NMFS, USFWS). Motion passes unanimously.

HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board met to consider the scope of work for a review of the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework, review the alternative bait trial results, and populate advisory panel membership.

Staff provided the Board with an overview of the ARM Subcommittee's January 2016 meeting and recommendations for conducting a review of the ARM Framework. The ARM Subcommittee discussed two timeframe options for conducting a review: (1) (long-term) a comprehensive review of the model assumptions and change in the modeling software that could be completed through a contractor over 18-24 months; and (2) (short-term) an update of several components of the ARM Framework by fall 2016 that may result in new harvest packages for Delaware Bay states for the 2017 fishing year. After considering the benefits and challenges of each timeframe option, the Board supported moving forward with the short-term timeframe for review of the ARM Framework to be conducted by the ARM Subcommittee in consultation with the Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee. In light of the ARM review, the Board discussed the on-going issue of incorporating biomedical harvest data in a benchmark stock assessment which has been hindered by data confidentiality. States with biomedical facilities agreed to present to the Board their regulations on data confidentiality for consideration at the next Board meeting.

The Board received a report on the results of alternative bait trials conducted in Connecticut and Rhode Island. The results of the bait trials indicate artificial bait performed similarly to horseshoe crab bait that is currently used. Following discussion by the Board, staff was tasked with compiling a report comparing the costs between currently used horseshoe crab bait and artificial bait for Board consideration at its next meeting.

Lastly, the Board approved the appointment of Brett Hoffmeister from Massachusetts to the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel. States were asked to review their current representation and submit new nominations to the Advisory Panel by April 1, 2016.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to accept Brett Hoffmeister from Massachusetts to the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel.

Motion made by Mr. Adler and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries unanimously.

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board reviewed progress on the red drum, Atlantic croaker, and spot benchmark stock assessments, discussed future management of spotted seatrout, and approved the 2015 Spot FMP Review.

The Board reviewed progress on the red drum stock assessment, which was peer reviewed in August 2015. Over the past six months, the Stock Assessment Subcommittee has worked to incorporate the comments of the peer review panel in order to develop stable models for both the northern and southern stocks. It is expected that these models will undergo desk review in March 2016 and will be presented to the Board in May 2016. Work also continues on the Atlantic croaker and spot stock assessments. A data workshop for both species was held in September 2015 and the first assessment workshop will be held in February 2016. It is expected that these assessments will be peer-reviewed in late 2016.

The Board continued discussion on the future management of the spotted seatrout. At the November 2015 meeting, the Board passed a motion to recommend that the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board withdraw the Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan. This motion was revisited given that some states' regulations for spotted seatrout are tied to the Commission Plan. Even with this concern, the Board reiterated the appropriateness of state management given the largely non-migratory nature of the species. As a result, the Board decided to indefinitely postpone the recommendation to the Policy Board until states have the authority to implement regulations independent of the Commission Plan.

Finally, the Board approved the 2015 FMP Review for Spot and *de minimis* status for Georgia. Dr. Louis Daniel (NC) was elected vice-chair of the South Atlantic Board. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

Motions

Move to approve the 2015 Spot FMP Review, state compliance reports, and *de minimis* status for Georgia.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Geer. Motion passes unanimously.

Move to postpone indefinitely the November 2015 recommendation to the ISFMP Policy Board to withdraw the Spotted Seatrout FMP from the Commission.

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Dr. Daniel. Motion passes (11 in favor).

TAUTOG MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 3, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Tautog Management Board met to receive an update on Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. A summary of ongoing efforts was presented by the Plan Development Team (PDT) and the Law Enforcement Subcommittee, two groups that are working on the amendment.

The PDT presented draft language for overfishing/overfished definitions, stock rebuilding schedule, fishing mortality (F) reduction schedule, and probability of achieving F target (if overfishing) for the Board to review and provide feedback on. The Board advised the PDT to further evaluate the probability of achieving the F target if the stock is experiencing overfishing.

The Law Enforcement Subcommittee, which is tasked with investigating the illegal harvest of tautog, presented draft objectives for a commercial harvest tagging program. The Board made no changes to the draft objectives and requested the Subcommittee continue to evaluate tagging alternatives for a live commercial fish market. The Subcommittee is requesting feedback from stakeholders (commercial fishermen, researchers, dealers, etc.) to gain additional knowledge on market dynamics and tag type/placement.

The Board received an update on the status of the Long Island Sound (LIS) stock assessment and the New York/New Jersey stock assessment (excluding the LIS). The Board expects to receive the peer-reviewed stock assessments at its August 2016 Meeting.

The Board discussed the potential for a 2016 stock assessment update so Draft Amendment 1 management measures will be based on data through 2015. The Board expects to make a decision in May. In the interim, the Technical Committee will meet to discuss the availability of age data through 2015.

For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

No motions made.

ATLANTIC STRIPED BASS MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to (1) consider tabled motions from its November 2015 meeting, (2) consider Conservation Equivalent Management Proposals submitted by Maryland and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC), (3) receive an update on the 2016 Cooperative Winter Tagging Program, and (4) elect a Vice-Chair.

Maryland spoke in regards to the tabled motions from the November 2015 Board meeting; *“Move to initiate an Addendum to reconsider management options in the Chesapeake Bay from Addendum IV for 2016 based on the stock assessment update in 2015 and retrospective projections. Motion by Mr. Luisi, second by Mr. O’Reilly.”* and *“Move to amend to remove the words “in the Chesapeake Bay”. Motion by Mr. Clark, second by Mr. Augustine.”* Maryland acknowledged that the main motion was made in support of concerns raised by its Chesapeake Bay stakeholders, and as a result of the 2015 stock assessment update which indicated a slightly more favorable stock status compared to the 2013 benchmark (the 2013 benchmark was the basis for the development and implementation of Addendum IV and the coastwide harvest reductions). However, considering the ISFMP Policy Board’s decision to include a striped bass stock assessment update in 2016, Maryland proposed, and the Board approved, a motion to *“to postpone indefinitely the two motions on the board, one from Mr. Luisi (Maryland), one from Mr. Clark (Delaware),”* with the intent that concept of these motions may be raised following review of 2016 stock assessment update in November.

The Board reviewed Addendum IV Conservation Equivalent Management Proposals submitted by Maryland and PRFC for their 2016 recreational fisheries. For Maryland, only two of the options that met the criteria for conservation equivalency (CE) had not yet been approved by the Board for use in Maryland jurisdictional waters; one would create regulatory consistency between Delaware and Maryland along the coast, and one for Maryland’s spring trophy fishery in the Chesapeake Bay. PRFC proposed to implement the same regulations as Maryland to create regulatory consistency between their jurisdictions for 2016. The Technical Committee (TC) and the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) reviewed the proposals and provided comment for Board consideration, per the requirements of Addendum IV. The Board approved the proposed options from Maryland and PRFC that met the required reduction in Addendum IV as recommended by the TC.

The Board received an update on the 2016 Winter Tagging Program from Dr. Wilson Laney (USFWS). With four hook-and-line trips remaining, 780 striped bass have been tagged to date. A complete analysis of the 2016 Program can be expected following completion of the hook-and-line component.

Lastly, the Board elected Mr. Russ Allen (NJ) as Board Vice-Chair. For more information, please contact Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Motions from November 2015

- 1. Move to initiate an Addendum to reconsider management options in the Chesapeake Bay from Addendum IV for 2016 based on the stock assessment update in 2015 and retrospective projections. Motion by Mr. Luisi, second by Mr. O’Reilly.**
- 2. Move to amend to remove the words “in the Chesapeake Bay”. Motion by Mr. Clark, second by Mr. Augustine.**

Move to postpone indefinitely the two motions on the board, one from Mr. Luisi (Maryland), one from Mr. Clark (Delaware).

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carries (16 in favor).

Move to approve conservation equivalency proposal options from Maryland and PRFC that meet the required reduction in Addendum IV as recommended by the TC and presented today.

Motion made by Mr. Luisi and seconded by Mr. O’Reilly. Motion adopted unanimously.

Move to nominate as vice chairman of the Atlantic Striped Bass Board Mr. Russ Allen.

Motion made by Mr. Gary and seconded by Mr. Augustine. Motion carries.

WINTER FLOUNDER MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Winter Flounder Management maintained management measures for the 2016 fishing season (May 1 – April 30). Minimum commercial and recreational management measures, as shown in the table below, for the inshore waters of Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic (SNE/MA).

Stock	Sector	Trip Limit/ Possession Limit	Size Limit	Season	Gear
GOM	Commercial	500 lbs/ trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end
	Recreational	8 fish	12"	NA	
SNE/MA	Commercial	50 lbs/ 38 fish/trip/day	12"	Maintain closures	Minimum 6.5" square or diamond mesh in cod-end. 100-lb mesh trigger.
	Recreational	2 fish	12"	March 1 – December 31	

The Board reviewed the Technical Committee’s (TC) report, *A Review of the Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Winter Flounder Fishery and Management Program Under Zero Possession Limits*. The report investigated the impacts of zero possession limits, implemented from May 1, 2009 through April 30, 2013 in federal waters, on the SNE/MA stock. Analysis shows no evidence in the surveys indices to suggest that biomass has increased recently, although the TC believes the length of the moratorium may not have been long enough to significantly impact the stock. The TC encouraged the Board to choose management actions that continue to reduce targeting and fishing morality, in an effort for SNE/MA winter flounder to remain a bycatch fishery in state waters.

The New England Fishery Management Council presented an overview of federal management measures for winter flounder stocks to the Board. The Board maintains its commitment to work with the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office to collaboratively manage winter flounder stocks throughout their range. For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

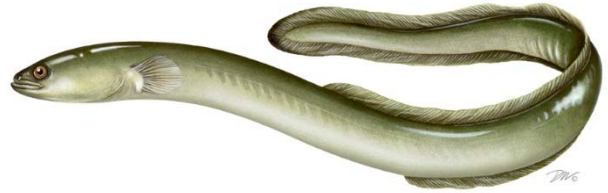
No motions made.

AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2016)

Press Release

ASMFC American Eel Board Approves North Carolina Aquaculture Plan for 2016

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s American Eel Management Board approved North Carolina’s Aquaculture Plan for 2016, allowing up to 200 pounds of glass eels to be harvested for aquaculture purposes. North Carolina’s plan is the first to be approved under the aquaculture plan provisions of Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Eel.



“North Carolina is grateful for the Board’s provisional approval of its Aquaculture Plan,” stated Dr. Louis Daniel, Director of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. “Through the plan, we hope to demonstrate that domestic aquaculture of American eel can be done successfully while maintaining the rebuilding goals and objectives of the FMP.”

The Board reviewed comments provided by the Technical Committee, Advisory Panel, and Law Enforcement Committee on the various merits of the plan prior to its approval. Board approval was contingent on two issues (1) export of glass eels will be prohibited, and (2) the first year of the plan will be conducted as a pilot program. During the first year, North Carolina will work with its industry to identify viable collection sites for glass eels for its use in aquaculture. If North Carolina intends to continue this plan into a second year, which will require additional Board approval, the state will need to work with the Technical Committee to determine sampling protocols for obtaining glass eel abundance estimates across the identified collection sites.

For more information, please contact Mike Waine, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

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PR16-04

Meeting Summary

The American Eel Management Board approved a young-of-year survey sampling gear change for South Carolina. The approval will result in the use of eel ramps instead of fyke nets to sample glass eels at their Goose Creek sampling site. The eel ramps are anticipated to be a more effective sampling gear given the recent challenges (e.g., extreme tides, fallen trees, erosion) associated with the use of fyke nets.

The Board also approved a conservation equivalency request from the state of Maine. The request will enable Maine's elver fishery to fish 7 days a week in lieu of taking two days out (Sat/Sun) in previous fishing seasons. The conservation equivalency request was approved on the basis that Maine is now managing its elver fishery with a hard quota including accountability measures, so the use of previously implemented input controls (e.g. days out) is no longer necessary.

Lastly, the Board revisited a discussion about Addendum IV commercial yellow eel quota allocations. Although preliminary 2015 landings show the management trigger for automatic allocation will likely not be met for 2015, several states are concerned that if allocation triggers in a future year it will result in significant challenges to their fisheries. The Board plans to continue to think through alternative quota allocation scenarios to address these concerns. Any potential change in allocations would require an Addendum to the Fishery Management Plan which has not yet been initiated.

For more information, contact Michael Waine, Senior Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at mwaine@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Main Motion

Move to approve the NC aquaculture plan as presented today.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Geer

Motion to Amend

Move to amend the motion that the NC aquaculture plan include the recommendations from the TC and that the plan would also include that no export of glass eel would be allowed.

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion carries.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend that year 1 will be exploratory to determine locations in which glass eels are present. At that time, NC will consult with the TC to determine the best methodology to determine usable abundance estimates.

Motion made by Dr. Daniel and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion carries (18 in favor, 1 opposed).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to approve the NC aquaculture plan and include the recommendations from the TC and that the plan would also include that no export of glass eel would be allowed and that year 1 will be exploratory to determine locations in which glass eels are present. At that time, NC will consult with the TC to determine the best methodology to determine usable abundance estimates.

Motion carries (18 in favor, 1 opposed).

Move to approve the SC survey sampling proposal as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion carries (18 in favor).

Move to approve conservation equivalency management proposal from ME as presented today.

Motion made by Mr. Augustine and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion approved without objection.

INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (FEBRUARY 4, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board met to consider a number of issues including the results of the 2016 Commission Survey, revisions to Commission guidance documents, revisions to state declared interests on Commission species management boards, an update on Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) projects, progress on the weakfish stock assessment, and correspondence requests from two management boards.

The Policy Board reviewed the results of the 2016 Commissioner survey, which measures Commissioner opinions regarding the progress and actions of the Commission in 2015. There was an overall positive trend that the Commission was working towards its mission and vision. The Commission will continue its efforts to work effectively with state and federal partners and stakeholders, as well as provide transparency and clear management documents for stakeholders. A subgroup of Commissioners was formed to review the recommendations of the survey and identify possible ways to incorporate them into Commission activities.

Over the past six months the Commission has been working to update the Commission Guiding Documents (e.g. the ISFMP Charter; ASMFC Compact, Rules and Regulations; Committee Guidance Document) to reflect the current practices of the Commission. The Policy Board approved changes to the Charter and the Committee Guidance Documents. The changes, which were outlined in a memo included in the meeting materials, include notification of action items prior to Commission meetings, timing of public information documents and addenda, timing of advisory panel (AP) input for amendments, staff participation during technical committee meetings, proxy appointments for council members on species boards, voting procedures, definition of final action, committee chair participation at board meetings, and travel reimbursement for AP chairs. A revised ISFMP Charter, Committee Guidance Document, and Rules and Regulations will be available on the Commission website by February 15.

Management board membership is driven by states and jurisdictions declaring an interest in a species fishery management plan. The Commission's Rules and Regulations list the criteria for a state to declare interest in a fishery. The Board approved two requests for changes from states. The State of Delaware was removed from the Winter Flounder Board. While juvenile winter flounder are still found in Delaware waters, there have been no fishery landings for the past several years. If the fishery experiences a re-emergence of flounder the state will request to be put back on the board. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was added to the Atlantic Menhaden Board. Atlantic menhaden are not uncommon in Pennsylvania's waters of the estuary and, at times, are relatively abundant. The condition of the Atlantic menhaden population and the effect of the commercial fishery upon it likely has significant effects on some of the ASMFC species managed in Pennsylvania, namely striped bass, American shad, and river herring.

Climate change is impacting fishery resources and the communities that depend on them. The Board began a discussion on fisheries management and climate change, with a focus on management when stocks do not respond to regulatory changes due to climate impacts. The Board will continue the discussion at the May meeting, which will include presentations from NOAA experts on climate change including fisheries vulnerability to changing climates.

The Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) provided an update to the Board. In August, ACFHP was awarded \$250,000 from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to manage restoration and/or research projects on black sea bass habitat in the Mid-Atlantic. ACFHP released the RFP in December. Seven proposals were received and are in the process of being evaluated and ranked. For the seventh consecutive year, ACFHP solicited applications for National Fish Habitat Action Plan-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Funding. It received nine proposals, eight were eligible for funding, and recommended the top five on the ground projects (plus ACFHP operational funding) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for funding. These projects include: dam removals on the Pawcatuck River, Rhode Island, the Third Herring Brook, Massachusetts and the Coonamesset River, Massachusetts; mangrove restoration in the Indian River Lagoon, Florida; and a living shoreline project in Long Island, New York. These projects will benefit species such as Shad, River herring, Spotted Sea Trout, Red drum, Striped bass, Tautog, and more. ACFHP has also continued progress on installing conservation moorings in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island. They received \$20,000 from NOAA's Atlantic Coastal Act to replace tradition chain moorings with those that use bungee technology. These conservation moorings reduce seagrass destruction, improving fish habitat. Lastly, the Fish Habitat Decision Support Tool (www.fishhabitatool.org) has been completed. ACFHP's contribution to the tool, which included collaboration among the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative; Downstream Strategies, LLC; US Fish and Wildlife Service; and The Nature Conservancy, included models on Winter flounder in Long Island Sound and Narragansett Bay, and Shad and River herring along the Atlantic coast. Additionally, ACFHP's Species-Habitat Matrix, which analyzed the use of habitat for over 100 species of Atlantic fishes during five life stages, was accepted for publication and will be featured in the April 2016 issue of *BioScience*. A summary report is currently available on the ACFHP website: <http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org/Documents/Species%20Habitat%20Matrix%20Summary%20Report.pdf>.

Staff updated the Board on the progress of the weakfish stock assessment. The Weakfish Stock Assessment Subcommittee is making final edits to the assessment report, which will be reviewed by the Technical Committee over the next few weeks. The peer review is scheduled for late March. The assessment will be presented to the Weakfish Board in May.

The Board agreed to send several letters to NOAA Fisheries. The first letter is to request 100% trip level reporting for all federally-licensed lobster vessels in order to increase information on fishery locations and catch composition for future development of both lobster and Jonah crab management, as well as to fill future data requests from Councils. The second letter is to identify any concerns, especially regarding national standards, on the legality of the current Jonah crab claw exemption for fishermen in New Jersey through Virginia given the desire for complementary measures in federal waters. Lastly, with a healthy stock status, the Commission is requesting a 1,000 pound increase in the spiny dogfish trip limit, for a new trip limit of 6,000 pounds to be implemented in federal waters. The increase could help industry explore new markets to fully utilize the commercial quota.

In its last order of Business, Chair Doug Grout acknowledged the decade-long commitment of Pennsylvania Commissioner Proxy, Leroy Young to the Commission and its programs. This was Leroy's last meeting before his retirement. For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at tkerns@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Motion to accept changes to the ISFMP Charter and Committee Guidance and Assessment Process Document with the amendment made by Dr. Laney.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion carries unanimously.

Motion to add the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the Atlantic Menhaden Board and remove Delaware from the Winter Flounder Board.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Mr. McKiernan. Motion passes unanimously.

On behalf of the Lobster Board, move to send two letters to NOAA, one which recommends 100% trip level reporting for all federally licensed lobster vessels in order to increase information on fishery locations and catch composition and another requesting any legal concerns, especially regarding national standards, on the legality of the current Jonah crab claw exemption for fishermen in NJ through VA given the desire for complementary measures in federal waters.

Motion by Mr. McKiernan. Motion carries (14 in favor, 1 abstention).

On behalf of the Spiny Dogfish Board move to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries recommending an increase in the spiny dogfish trip limit to 6,000 pounds in federal waters.

Motion made by Mr. McKiernan. Motion carries unanimously.

BUSINESS SESSION (FEBRUARY 4, 2016)

Meeting Summary

The Business Session approved Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Herring, with a slight modification to remove two sentences of the document regarding economic impacts because there were likely other factors which would have had a more significant influence on price than those described in the sentences.

The Amendment refines the spawning closure system, modifies the fixed gear set-aside, and requires an empty fish hold provision contingent on federal adoption. The Amendment consolidates prior amendments (and associated addenda), and recent management decisions into a single document; it is now the guiding management document for Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) Atlantic Herring fishery.

The Amendment allows for the use of a modified GSI-based spawning monitoring system to monitor reproductive maturity and better align the timing of spawning area closures with the onset of spawning. This new method will be tested and evaluated for effectiveness during the 2016 fishing season. If found to be ineffective the Section has the option to revert to using the prior monitoring system. Default closure dates have been modified to late August or early October depending on the area. The spawning closure period remains four weeks.

Previously, the fixed gear set-aside was available to fixed gear fishermen through November 1, after which the remaining set-aside became available to the rest of the Area 1A fishery. Under Amendment 3, fixed gear fishermen will now have access to the quota as long as the directed fishery is open.

Amendment 3 also requires fish holds to be empty of fish prior to trip departures. This measure, which is contingent on adoption in federal waters, seeks to minimize wasteful fishing practices and encourage harvest based on market demand. The New England Fishery Management Council has included a similar provision in its Framework Adjustment 4 to the Federal Atlantic Herring FMP. Framework Adjustment 4 is currently under review by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office.

The November 1 date was set because, typically, herring have migrated out of the Gulf of Maine by that time. Anecdotal evidence suggests herring are in the Gulf of Maine after November 1, therefore, fixed gear fishermen requested the set-aside be made available to them for the remainder of the calendar year.

The Amendment consolidates prior amendments (and associated addenda), and recent management decisions into a single document; it is now the guiding management document for Area 1A (inshore Gulf of Maine) Atlantic herring fishery. A press release on the Amendment's approval will be released on February 8th.

The Business Session also approved the revised ASMFC Rules and Regulations as presented at the ISFMP Policy Board meeting (see ISFMP Policy Board meeting summary for a full description). For more information, please contact Bob Beal, Executive Director, at rbeal@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to remove the following language from Section 2.7 (p 43) of Amendment 3 to the FMP for Atlantic Herring:

“The summer restriction on Area 1A to fixed gear and purse seines is said to have led to a significant increase in the price of herring for bait, which has a potentially major impact on the lobster fishery. Notably midwater/pair trawlers are not allowed in Area 1A until October 1, implemented by NEFMC's Amendment 1 to the Herring FMP.”

Motion made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion carries unanimously.

On behalf of the Atlantic Herring Section move the Commission approve Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring Fishery Management Plan as amended today.

Motion made by Mr. White. Motion carries unanimously.

Move to approve the changes made to the Rules and Regulations as proposed and as presented at the ISFMP Policy Board.

Motion made by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Abbott. Motion passes unanimously.