



# Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

## 2016 Spring Meeting Summary

*Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

2016 Spring Meeting  
Alexandria, VA  
May 2-5, 2016

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### Meeting Summaries, Press Releases and Motions

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## AMERICAN LOBSTER MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 2, 2016)

### *Press Release*

### **ASMFC American Lobster Board Approves Jonah Crab Addendum I & Initiates Addendum to Establish a Coastwide Standard for Claw Landings**

Alexandria, VA – The American Lobster Management Board approved Addendum I to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The Addendum establishes a bycatch limit of 1,000 pounds of crab/trip for non-trap gear (e.g., otter trawls, gillnets) and non-lobster trap gear (e.g., fish, crab, and whelk pots) effective January 1, 2017. In doing so, the Addendum caps incidental landings of Jonah crab across all non-directed gear types with a uniform bycatch allowance. While the gear types in Addendum I make minimal contributions to total landings in the fishery, the 1,000 crab limit provides a cap to potential increases in effort and trap proliferation.

The Addendum responds to concerns regarding the appropriateness of the 200 crab per calendar day/500 crab per trip incidental bycatch limit for non-trap gear established by the 2015 Jonah Crab FMP, as well as concerns regarding the lack of effort controls on non-lobster traps and the potential for trap proliferation. Data submitted by the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries illustrated less than 1% of non-trap gear incidentally harvested Jonah crab in excess of the FMP bycatch limits. Data from the VTR database also indicated that between May 1, 2013 and August 31, 2015, 194 trips landed Jonah crab with non-lobster gear such as whelk, crab, and fish pots.

The Board also initiated the development of an addendum to consider establishing a coastwide standard for claw landings in the Jonah crab fishery. The FMP currently specifies the fishery be strictly whole crab except for those individuals who can prove a history of claw landings in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia; however, claw fishermen from New York and Maine have since been identified and these individuals are currently only allowed to land whole crabs. At the request of the Board, NOAA Fisheries provided regulatory guidance on implementation of the current exemption in federal waters, highlighting the exemption may not be consistent with National Standard 4 (measures shall not discriminate between residents of different states). As a result, the Board initiated a draft addendum to create a coastwide claw standard with options for a strictly whole crab fishery, a whole crab fishery with the allowance for a specific volume of detached claws per trip, and the unlimited landing of claws that meet a 2.5" minimum length. The draft addendum will be presented to the Board in August.

The Board also discussed potential management actions to address American lobster stock declines in Southern New England (SNE). It agreed to initiate the development of an addendum to address the poor condition of the SNE stock by lowering fishing mortality and increasing egg production through a combination of management tools including gauge size changes, season closures, area closures, and trap reductions. Underlying the Board's discussion was the shared belief that the condition of the SNE American lobster stock is serious and in need of action. Further, its depleted condition is due to a combination of environmental factors and fishing pressure. Lastly, the Board agreed not to pursue a moratorium in the SNE fishery. As a first step in the addendum process, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to review management measures which could achieve a 20%-60% increase in egg production. This analysis will be presented to the Board in August. In addition to taking action on SNE, the Board tasked the Technical Committee to explore a several issues regarding the long-term

sustainably of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock given the past few years of poor recruitment. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org).

###

PR16 -09

### ***Meeting Summary***

The American Lobster Management Board (Board) met to (1) discuss management action to address the poor condition of the Southern New England stock (SNE), address various aspects of the Jonah Crab Fishery Management Plan (FMP) including Draft Addendum I and the harvest of claws (see above press release), and discuss the potential for a National Monument in the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area.

The Board reviewed a report from the Technical Committee (TC) which responded to the tasks assigned in November 2015 and follow-up questions from the February 2016 meeting. Model simulations of the potential impacts of gauge size changes in the SNE fishery showed that a 5-10mm increase in the minimum size would result in increased biomass over time. While this type of management action would result in short-term reductions in harvest, catch levels would be expected to stabilize in the long-run. The report also highlighted, although natural mortality has increased over time, fishing mortality is a larger source of mortality in the stock. A report by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management showed a correlation between traps fished and the exploitation rate in SNE, suggesting current trap reductions should reduce exploitation. The report also showed there would be short-term harvest reductions from changes to the gauge size, especially as the result of increases to the minimum size. Finally, a report from the Plan Development Team presented a suite of potential management objectives ranging from increasing spawning stock biomass through large reductions in harvest to perpetuating the fishery at the expense of the stock. The report also investigated the potential to standardize regulations in SNE, highlighting this would reduce uncertainty in future stock assessments and improve enforcement.

Following these reports, the Board initiated the development of an addendum to address the poor condition of the SNE stock by lowering fishing mortality and increasing egg production through a combination of management measures, including gauge size changes, season closures, area closures, and trap reductions (see above press release for more information).

The Board discussed future management of the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GBK) stock. While the 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment found abundance levels to be high, updated indices show a decline a settlement in recent years. In order to compile more information on changes occurring to the GOM/GBK stock, the Board charged the TC with a number of tasks, including investigating the connectivity between Gulf of Maine and Canada stocks, describing how changes in ocean currents are affecting larval supply patterns, and developing a traffic light analysis as a potential control rule.

Finally, the Board discussed potential federal and Presidential action which could limit lobster fishing in the offshore canyons and seamounts. The Board reviewed results from an offshore lobster and Jonah crab survey administered by the Commission which sought to obtain detailed information on lobster and Jonah crab fishing effort and revenue in and around the offshore canyons. The survey was initiated at the request of the New England Fishery Management Council, who is currently drafting an Omnibus

Deep-Sea Coral Amendment which could limit lobster traps in discrete coral zones or broad regions. Responses to the survey showed a high dependence on the canyons for revenue from lobster and Jonah crab fishing. The Board also discussed the potential for a Presidential declaration of a National Monument in the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts through the Antiquities Act. The Board agreed to send a letter to President Obama highlighting the Board's preference for the current New England Fishery Management Council coral management process to continue without Presidential use of the Antiquities Act and should the President decide to designate a National Monument, the public and affected user groups should be allowed to review and comment on any specific proposal.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org).

### **Motions**

#### **Postponed Motion from February 2016**

**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:**

- **Analyzing the plans rebuilding targets & thresholds to account for current environmental conditions;**
- **Work to stabilize & increase SSB through changes in management measures;**
- **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);**
- **Improve current management & compliance with lowered trap limits of nearshore trap fisheries by proposing a uniform closed season & new trap tag deadlines; 5**
- **Accelerate trap allocation cuts that are already codified for the next 5 years in Areas 2 & 3;**
- **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.

#### **Move to bring the postponed motion forward for consideration.**

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

#### **Motion to table indefinitely the February 2016 main motion to initiate an addendum to address declining lobster conditions in SNE/MA.**

Motion made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1abstention).

### **Main Motion**

**Move that the Board shall initiate an addendum to minimize stock declines by lowering fishing mortality and increasing egg production by a combination of changes to the minimum size, maximum size, closed seasons, closed areas, trap caps and cuts, standardizing regulations throughout the area, and or combinations of the above. Target egg production increase shall be not less than 40% above the level that would otherwise be produced with no additional management. Final regulations for this step shall be fully phased in within 3 years no later than June 1, 2019.**

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

### **Motion to Amend**

**Motion to amend to insert "long term" before stock decline and remove "increase should not be less than 40% above the level that would otherwise be produced with no additional management" and**

**insert “target increased egg production to be above the level that would be produced without management action.”**

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion fails due to a lack of majority (5 in favor, -5 opposed, 1 abstention, 1 null).

#### **Motion to Amend**

**Motion to amend to replace ‘minimize stock declines’ with ‘address stock declines in SNE’ and to remove ‘Target egg production increase shall be not less than 40% above the level that would otherwise be produced with no additional management’ and replace with ‘develop a range of long term increases in target egg production between 20%-60% above the level that would otherwise be produced with no additional management’.**

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded Mr. Keliher. Motion carries (10 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention).

#### **Main Motion as Amended**

**Move that the Board shall initiate an addendum to address stock declines in SNE by lowering fishing mortality and increasing egg production by a combination of changes to the minimum size, maximum size, closed seasons, closed areas, trap caps and cuts, standardizing regulations throughout the area, and or combinations of the above. Develop a range of long term increases in target egg production between 20%-60% above the level that would otherwise be produced with no additional management. Final regulations for this step shall be fully phased in within 3 years no later than June 1, 2019.**

Motion carries (10 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention).

#### **Move to have the Technical Committee respond to the following tasks:**

- **Synthesize current literature and studies which investigate the connectivity between the GOM/GBK stock and Canada**
- **Plot changes in size distribution of egg-bearing females over time in the GOM/GBK stock**
- **Describe changes in GOM ocean currents and how this could be affecting larval supply patterns**
- **Investigate the stock-recruit relationship in the GOM/GBK stock**
- **Review on-going research on GOM lobster in order to identify research holes and prioritize the importance of these data holes to effective management**
- **Examine the competing biological management measures between Area 1, 3 and the Outer Cape Cod to look at the benefits of harmonizing these measures**
- **Investigate and develop a Traffic Light Analysis as a potential control rule using average harvest and abundance values from the last 10 years as baselines. This approach will include using multiple indices such as the settlement and ventless trap surveys, trawl survey data, landing information and other indices as recommended by the TC.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. White. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1 abstention).

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to adopt for Addendum 1 to the Jonah Crab FMP, issue 1 option A, 200 crabs per day 500 crabs per trip; issue 2 option B 200 crabs per day 500 crabs per trip.**

Motion by Mr. Gilmore, seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion substituted.

**Motion to Substitute**

**Move to substitute for Addendum 1 to the Jonah Crab FMP, issue 1 option B 1000 crabs per trip and issue 2 option D 1000 crabs per trip.**

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded Mr. Miller. Motion carries (7 in favor, 4 opposed).

**Main Motion as Substituted**

**Move to adopt for Addendum 1 to the Jonah Crab FMP, issue 1 option B 1000 crabs per trip and issue 2 option D 1000 crabs per trip.**

Motion carries (9 in favor, 3 opposed).

**Move to make the implementation date of January 1, 2017.**

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded Mr. Stockwell. Motion carries (10 in favor, 1 opposed).

**Move to approve Addendum I to the Jonah Crab FMP as amended today.**

Motion made by Mr. Grout and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion carries (11 in favor, 1 opposed); Roll Call Vote: In Favor – ME, NH, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA, NMFS, NEFMC; Opposed – MA).

**Move to initiate an addendum to create a coastwide standard for claw landings in the Jonah crab fishery with options to:**

- 1) Establish a requirement to allow only whole crabs be landed;**
- 2) Establish a requirement to land only whole crabs but allow a specified (volumetric) amount of detached claws per vessel per trip which meet a minimum length of 2.5” Proposed volumetric amounts may include the following: a single 5 gallon container, a bushel, or a standard fish tote.**
- 3) Allow the unlimited landing of detached claws which meet a minimum length of 2.5”.**

Motion by made Mr. Gilmore and seconded Mr. Luisi. Motion adopted by consensus.

**Move that the American Lobster Board recommend the ISFMP Policy Board send a letter to the President of the United States of America, regarding the following:**

- The preference of the Commission would be for the current NE Council coral management process to continue without Presidential use of the Antiquities Act to protect deep sea corals.**
- Should a President (CEQ) decide to designate a New England waters deep water Monument prior to the end of his Presidency, the Commission requests that any areas so designated, be limited to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected, as required by the Antiquities Act.**
- The area be limited to depths greater than approximately 900 meters and encompass any or all of the region seaward of this line out to the EEZ. That only bottom tending fishing effort be prohibited in the area and that all other mid water/surface fishing methods (recreational and commercial) be allowed to continue to use the area.**
- That the public and affected user groups be allowed to review and comment on any specific proposal prior to its implementation.**

Motion made by Mr. Reid and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes (9 in favor, 3 opposed, 2 abstentions).

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (MAY 3, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Executive Committee met to discuss a number of issues. It approved the FY2017 budget; directed staff to develop a white paper on the composition of Plan Development Teams; and directed staff to develop criteria for prioritizing annual research priorities. The Committee also discussed and recommended for Commission action the integration of ACCSP under ASMFC governance. For more information, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at [lleach@asmfc.org](mailto:lleach@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motion***

**Move that the Executive Committee bring forward to the full Commission, for its consideration, the integration of the ACCSP under ASMFC governance.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Woodward. Motion passes unanimously.

## **HORSESHOE CRAB MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 3, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Horseshoe Crab Management Board met to receive an update on the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework review, discuss biomedical data confidentiality and the next stock assessment, and review the alternative bait cost comparison.

The Board was presented an overview of the ARM Subcommittee's discussions and work process since the February 2016 meeting. The ARM Subcommittee has considered the following items in the ARM review process: 1) evaluating the current management program used in the ARM Framework such as the horseshoe crab abundance estimates as well as the protocol used to estimate the red knot stop-over population in the Delaware Bay region; 2) considering alternative harvest packages of female crab harvest; 3) and discussing changes to the reward function that specifies the optimal harvest level. Moving forward, the ARM Subcommittee will draft recommended changes to the ARM Framework and present those recommendations to the Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee and Delaware Bay Ecosystem Technical Committee this summer. Taking into consideration feedback from the Technical Committees, the ARM Subcommittee will then present recommended changes to the ARM Framework to the Board at the ASMFC 2016 Summer Meeting.

The Board was presented with the conclusions from the Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Assessment Science Committee, and Management Science Committee regarding the challenges biomedical data confidentiality pose for proceeding with a benchmark stock assessment. The committees concluded that guidance from the Board was needed on how best to advance the stock assessment process. Biomedical catch and associated mortality have become a larger proportion of the total removals of horseshoe crabs over the past 20 years as landings from the bait fishery have been reduced through management action. In trying to incorporate this data into a stock assessment process while maintaining data confidentiality at the regional level, the option of a 'black box' regional stock assessment approach was discussed. This approach will require all participants involved in gathering data, analyzing assessment models, and reviewing the stock assessment report to have confidential access, limiting the general public's participation in the stock assessment process. Noting the need to complete a benchmark stock assessment for horseshoe crab and not delay given concern over



population trends in the New England and New York regions, the Board recommended a 'black box' regional stock assessment be completed in 2018.

The Board was provided a review of cost comparison between Ecobait produced by LaMonica Fine Foods used in 2014 bait trials and traditional horseshoe crab bait. LaMonica Fine Foods' Ecobait uses approximately 1/10 to ¼ of horseshoe crab per piece of bait with an average cost of approximately \$0.80 per piece of bait – the amount of horseshoe crab used in the Ecobait is considered a way of reducing the total number of horseshoe crabs needed in the bait fishery. The Alternative Bait Working Group and Advisory Panel (AP) members provided the following considerations in comparing the Ecobait to traditional bait:

- Notably that the cost of horseshoe crabs vary by sex and by region (Mid-Atlantic vs New England)
- Cost savings and conservation of horseshoe crabs may be lessened due to the needs of doubling amount of Ecobait used in the bait trials because of consistency issues
- Additional bait trials should be conducted in other regions to adequately compare against the bait trial results in Connecticut and Rhode Island
- Ecobait should not be viewed as 'artificial' as it contains horseshoe crab
- Most fisherman are currently making their own bait recipe using small amounts of horseshoe crab with other ingredients in bait bags and cups

Staff summarized that based on information provided by Working Group, AP, and LaMonica Fine Foods, it is unclear at this point whether Ecobait is cost competitive relative traditional bait. Taking into consideration the 2014 bait trial results and initial cost comparison, the Board expressed interest in conducting additional bait trials in the future.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Move to add Horseshoe Crab to the stock assessment schedule in 2018 and to task the Stock Assessment Subcommittee and Technical Committee to complete a regional 'black box' benchmark stock assessment.**

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

## **SHAD & RIVER HERRING MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 3, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Shad and River Herring Management Board met to review the timetable for the next river herring and American shad stock assessments, receive reports on the Data Collection Standardization Workshop and Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG) activities in 2015, and approve the 2015 FMP Review.

Staff provided the Board with an overview of the upcoming stock assessments for river herring and American shad, currently scheduled for 2017 and 2018 respectively. Both stock assessments are anticipated to be updates to the previous assessments, which include additional years of data but maintain the model configuration from the previously peer-reviewed and accepted stock assessment,

and are not benchmark stock assessments. The Technical Committee (TC) conducted a preliminary review of available survey data that went into the previous assessments and concluded that there is likely not sufficient data from new surveys that would warrant a benchmark assessment for any of these species. The TC recommended that a joint Shad and River Herring Stock Assessment Subcommittee be populated by the Board and a joint Data Workshop for these assessments be held in fall 2016.

The Board was briefed on the River Herring Data Collection Standardization Workshop held in November 2015. The workshop was organized based on recommendations from the TC and research needs identified in the 2012 benchmark stock assessment. The workshop brought together 30 participants from 15 state agencies, 2 federal agencies (NOAA & USFWS), 1 federally recognized Tribe (Passamaquoddy), and Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Each of the agencies presented on current fishery-independent survey programs and discussed the best approaches to standardize surveys by gear type. Financial resource needs for moving surveys toward standardized protocols were also categorized based on immediacy and feasibility of implementation. The workshop report was published online and is currently available on the Commission website.

The Board was provided an update on TEWG activities in 2015 including funding of run counts in the St. Croix watershed; dam removal on the Exeter River in New Hampshire and fish passage barrier removals in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and North Carolina; and the collaboration between NOAA and ASMFC on a climate change vulnerability assessment on species including river herring. The full TEWG and TEWG subgroups met via conference calls in 2015 to review new research, identify conservation concerns and receive updates on restoration projects. An executive summary of TEWG activities in 2015 is currently being reviewed by TEWG members and will be available on the TEWG website soon.

Finally, the Board approved the 2015 FMP Review and compliance reports for Shad and River Herring and *de minimis* status for the following states: for American shad – Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts and Florida; for river herring – New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Florida.

For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**Move to approve the 2015 FMP Review of the 2014 fishing year and approve *de minimis* requests for ME, NH, MA, FL for shad, and FL, NH, MA for river herring.**

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

**Move to nominate John Clark as Vice Chair to the Shad and River Herring Management Board.**

Motion made by Dr. Armstrong and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motion passes unanimously.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE (MAY 3 & 4, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) met over two days during the 2016 Spring Meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

## **Species Issues**

**American Lobster** — The LEC reviewed recent work of the lobster enforcement subcommittee. David Borden briefed the LEC on the desire of the Lobster Management Board to ensure success of trap reduction and stock recovery efforts, and the need for successful enforcement. The Subcommittee will continue work on various enforcement strategies, especially for offshore enforcement. The LEC heard a report from Rene Cloutier on the status of Maine's trap tag transferability pilot program. The LEC agreed that Maine has done a good job of developing a program that seems to be working well to reduce untagged traps, and to make tag replacement and distribution more accountable. The LEC heard a report on future work by the ASMFC to address minimum size differences among states, and a review of V-notch enforcement effectiveness and standardization.

**Jonah Crab** — Jon Cornish briefed the LEC on recent action to implement bycatch limits for non-trap and non-lobster trap gear. Megan Ware advised the LEC that a new addendum may be developed to consider claw harvest. The LEC will be asked to review management options and provide input at future meetings.

**Tautog** — Jason Snellbaker briefed the LEC on the recent work of the Tautog Enforcement Subcommittee. The subcommittee will be reviewing possible tag designs that may be useable for live tautog, and that would meet enforcement requirements for durability and tamper-resistance.

**Summer Flounder** — Jason Snellbaker discussed the recent growth of safe-harbor requests and proposals to allow dual-state landings in New Jersey. Other LEC members reported similar increases in safe harbor requests. A number of management and potential enforcement issues were discussed associated with this program.

## **Other Issues**

The LEC reviewed the establishment of an Aerial Enforcement Subcommittee to begin working on a review and update of enforceability rankings for aerial enforcement. The subcommittee will also consider issues associated with federal-state coordination and funding for aerial enforcement work.

The LEC has been asked to provide a list of recommended enforcement safeguards in conjunction with American eel aquaculture operations in North Carolina. The LEC reviewed the permit criteria for North Carolina, and will develop written recommendations to guide future aquaculture proposals. For more information, please contact mark Robson, LEC Coordinator, at [markrobson2015@outlook.com](mailto:markrobson2015@outlook.com).

## **AMERICAN EEL MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 3, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The American Eel Management Board met to receive an update on the timing of the 2017 stock assessment, consider changes to the Addendum IV commercial yellow eel allocations, and receive a progress report on North Carolina's Glass Eel Aquaculture Plan.

In considering the timetable of the 2017 stock assessment, the Board was presented the summary of the Technical Committee's (TC) meeting in April 2016. Based on the current progress of eel research, the TC recommended an assessment update instead of a benchmark assessment. The Board expressed concern on whether an assessment update would provide sufficient management advice and

encouraged the TC to continue to prioritize research gaps to advance the scientific understanding of American eels. The TC will meet in the summer before the next Board Meeting.

In considering changes to the Addendum IV commercial yellow eel allocation, staff presented a draft proposal from New York to adjust the commercial yellow eel fishery quota in Addendum IV. New York along with other states in the fishery now have several years of more accurate landings data since allocation was determined from a combination of landings from 2010-2013. An allocation working group was established during the development of Addendum IV and thoroughly considered multiple allocation options during that process. The Board determined that reconvening the working group at this time is not needed. However, the Board agreed to consider a follow-up proposal from New York with more specific information on addressing allocation concerns. The Board will review this proposal at its meeting.

Lastly, the Board received a progress report on North Carolina's approved aquaculture plan. In February, the Board approved North Carolina's plan to harvest up to 200 pounds of glass eels for domestic aquaculture purposes. Due to delays in the issuance of permits, the aquaculture facility has not been able to catch glass eels. As a result, North Carolina expects to submit a similar aquaculture plan for the 2017 season which is due June 1, 2016. The Board will consider this request and any others submitted by the June 1 deadline at its next meeting.

For more information, please contact FMP coordinator Kirby Rootes-Murdy at [krootes-murdy@asmfc.org](mailto:krootes-murdy@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to initiate an addendum to reconsider the coastal cap and the state by state yellow eel allocation.**

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

#### **Motion to Postpone**

**Move to postpone until the August meeting.**

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

**Move to create a working group to address the inequities of the coastal allocation of yellow eels, as well as revisit the glass eel quota.**

Motion made by Mr. Keliher and seconded by Mr. Borden. Motion fails (2 in favor, 15 opposed).

### **ANNUAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE (MAY 3, 2016)**

#### ***Press Release***

#### **ASMFC Presents Annual Awards of Excellence**

Alexandria, VA - The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission presented members of the American Lobster Trap Tag Team, Jason McNamee, Chief Deputy Kurt Blanchard, and Special Agent Todd Smith with its Annual Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to fisheries management, science, and law enforcement along the Atlantic coast.

“Every year a great many people contribute to the success of fisheries management along the Atlantic coast. The Commission’s Annual Awards of Excellence recognize outstanding efforts by professionals who have made a difference in the way we manage and conserve our fisheries,” said ASMFC Chair Douglas Grout of the New Hampshire Fish and Game. “This evening, we honor several exceptional individuals for their contributions to the management and conservation of Atlantic coast fisheries.”



AAE Recipients from left: Special Agent Todd Smith, Peter Burns, Mike Cahall, Cheri Patterson, Allison Murphy, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Jason McNamee, and Chip Lynch

### Management & Policy Contributions

***American Lobster Trap Tag Team -- Mike Cahall, Nicholas Mwai and Karen Holmes of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP); Peter Burns, Chip Lynch, Allison Murphy, Julie Mackey and Ted Hawes with NOAA Fisheries; Cheri Patterson and Renee Zobel with NH Fish and Game; Tom Hoopes, Story Reed and Kerry Allard with MA Division of Marine Fisheries; Scott Olszewski, Daniel Costa and John Lake with RI Division of Fish and Wildlife; Mark Alexander and Colleen Giannini with CT Dept. on Energy and Environmental Protection; and Kim McKown with NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation***

The American Lobster Trap Tag Team is a group of 19 state and federal fishery and data managers and ACCSP staff responsible for the creation of the first of its kind cooperative permitting and trap allocation tracking database for American lobster. As a result of this ground breaking state/federal partnership, state and federal American lobster permits and associated trap tags can be managed in a

coordinated way for the first time. This is not an easy accomplishment given the complexities of American lobster management, which restricts the number of traps fished in its various Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) but allows the transfer of trap allocations among permit holders. The task of creating a multi-jurisdictional program among the states and NOAA Fisheries was challenging because of the differences between their permitting approaches. States typically issue permits in the name of the permit holder, while NOAA Fisheries issues permits by the name of the vessel. In order to be efficient for administrators, business friendly for fishermen, and achieve the goals of the lobster management plan, the transfer program had to seamlessly dovetail the differing rules and policies of the states and NOAA Fisheries. Further, the transfer database had to address issues such as matching state and federal permits that could be in different names; fixing differences in data

fields across jurisdictions; and reconciling problems associated with a single fisherman having multiple corporations with permits. The database became fully operational in late 2015 and provides the Commission, ACCSP, and associated partners a central database to manage and track trap tag transfers and allocations between commercial lobstermen across jurisdictions, while improving effort data essential for making informed management decisions.

### **Scientific & Technical Contributions**

#### ***Jason McNamee, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management***

Jason McNamee is being recognized for his unparalleled technical abilities, exceptional leadership, and unwavering energy. For over a decade, Mr. McNamee has served as a contributing member and in a leadership position on numerous Commission species technical committees, stock assessment subcommittees, and science advisory committees. He consistently provides thoughtful and unbiased insight into committee discussions and regularly volunteers for additional work to achieve the committee objectives, using his technical abilities and analytical skills to address challenging issues. In addition, he has a superlative ability to disengage from the political aspects of fisheries management to focus on technical and biological issues to ensure the well-being of our fisheries resources. He is an effective leader, able to find compromise in almost every situation, as well as a skilled communicator at all audience levels.

He has played a key role, as either committee chair or lead assessment scientist, on a number of benchmark stock assessments including the 2013 summer flounder assessment, the 2015 tautog assessment, and the upcoming black sea bass assessment. Notably, he led the Tautog Stock Assessment Subcommittee in developing an assessment that incorporated regional structure to address management board concerns. Further, he helped develop and implement a novel model approach to provide another method to assess this data-poor stock and further corroborate assessment results. As Chair of the Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee, Mr. McNamee has taken a leadership role in working towards the development of ecosystem-based reference points, offering innovative ways of incorporating ecosystem function into the stock assessment process.

In addition to his abilities and commitment to sound fisheries management, Mr. McNamee is an outstanding colleague, who is enthusiastic about his work, thoughtful and articulate in his speaking, considerate of others' viewpoints, and able to maintain a calm demeanor even under the most adversarial conditions. Highly regarded by committee members, Commission staff, and Commissioners, Mr. McNamee is an enormous asset to the Commission process and science-based fisheries management in general.

### **Law Enforcement Contributions**

#### ***Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management***

For more than 20 years, Deputy Chief Kurt Blanchard has been an outstanding member of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Environmental Police as well as an active member and past chair of the Commission's Law Enforcement Committee. Throughout his two decades of involvement, Deputy Chief Blanchard has provided leadership and insight on issues involving American lobster, Atlantic striped bass, American eel, tautog, and safe harbor concerns. His institutional knowledge of the Law Enforcement Committee and the Commission has been invaluable, making him the go to person on marine fisheries matters. Deputy Chief Blanchard has been an avid proponent for consistent, and easily understood and enforced management measures. He brings to every discussion the importance of balancing commercial, recreational, and resource concerns.

Deputy Chief Blanchard serves as an important member of a working group charged with providing feedback to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement related to joint enforcement agreements between that agency and the states. Having served in that capacity since the working group's inception, he has been invaluable in elevating the states' role in enforcing federally managed fisheries. His intimate knowledge of marine affairs and related communities has been an integral part in designing a reasonable and effective approach to protecting natural resources and the people that rely on them.

Committed to ensuring that the next generation of environmental police are given the necessary tools and education to succeed in conservation leadership, Deputy Chief Blanchard also serves as a steering committee member and executive advisor to the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy. In this capacity, he has provided guidance on curriculum, scheduling, candidate selection, instructor evaluation and budget management.

Deputy Chief Blanchard is being recognized today for his outstanding leadership in conservation law enforcement at the state, regional, and national levels, and for his passion and dedication to protecting marine fisheries resources.

***Special Agent Todd Smith, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement***

Since 2010, Special Agent Todd Smith has worked tirelessly to reveal significant quantities of summer flounder were being taken illegally under the cover of quota acquired through the Mid-Atlantic Research Set Aside (RSA) Program. Through his investigation, Special Agent Smith identified 12 persons and entities exploiting the RSA Program for personal gain, uncovering nearly 600,000 pounds of unreported summer flounder, worth an estimated \$1.2 million. Special Agent Smith highlighted the RSA Program's vulnerability to abuse through under-reporting and non-reporting of catch, ultimately resulting in the Program's suspension in 2015.

Special Agent Smith served 120 subpoenas which produced 12,500 documents and identified four vessels that sold unreported summer flounder to four federally permitted dealers. He managed the execution of seven simultaneous search warrants, the largest number ever executed in one day in the history of NOAA's Northeast Region, which resulted in further proof that eight individuals and four corporate entities continued to conceal illegal landings of summer flounder caught under the guise of the Program.

To date, Special Agent Smith's dedication and perseverance has resulted in charging nine defendants with 24 felonies. All nine have pleaded guilty. So far, seven sentences have been rendered totaling 16 months of prison time, \$1.2 million in fines, and \$550,000 in restitution. Furthermore, Special Agent Smith has shared his investigative experiences with NOAA Fisheries to aid in its efforts to formulate regulatory changes to the RSA Program. Special Agent Todd Smith achievements are notable and all our Atlantic fisheries are better off thanks to his hard work.

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PR16-10

## **ATLANTIC MENHADEN MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 4, 2016)**

### ***Press Release***

### **ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Board Approves Draft Addendum I for Public Comment *Episodic Event Set Aside Program also Extended and Revised to Include New York***

Alexandria, VA – The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Draft Addendum I to Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden for public comment. The Draft Addendum proposes modifying the FMP's bycatch allowance provision. Specifically, it considers allowing two licensed individuals 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. Bycatch represents less than 2% of the total coastwide landings.

The practice of two permitted fishermen working together from the same vessel to harvest Atlantic menhaden primarily occurs in the Chesapeake Bay pound net fishery. This practice enables the fishermen to pool resources for fuel and crew. However, the practice is currently constrained by the FMP's bycatch allowance provision, which includes a 6,000 pound/vessel/day limit. The Draft Addendum seeks comment on whether the provision should be revised to accommodate the interests of fixed-gear fishermen who work together, as authorized by the states and jurisdictions in which they fish.

The intent of Draft Addendum I is to add flexibility to one element of the bycatch allowance provision while the Board prepares to address menhaden management more comprehensively through the development of Draft Amendment 3 to the FMP over the next two years. A subsequent press release on the public hearing schedule and Draft Addendum I availability will be distributed once state hearings have been scheduled.

In a separate action, the Board extended the episodic event set aside program until the finalization of Amendment 3. It also conditionally approved a request from New York to be added as an eligible state. The program reserves 1% of the coastwide total allowable catch to be used by New England states in areas and times when menhaden occur in higher abundance than normal. Rhode Island opted into the program in 2014 and 2015, and harvested a portion of the set aside each year. As a result of the Board's decision to extend the program, the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut remain eligible to participate in the program in 2016.

New York is currently reporting unusually large amounts of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary, raising the potential for more large fish kills, similar to last year, as the waters warm. New York sought Board approval to participate in the episodic event set aside program so fishermen can harvest a portion of the large build-up of menhaden in the Peconic Bay estuary to mitigate the impacts of additional fish kills. The Board approved the request subject to a one million pound harvest cap under the episodic event set aside.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

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PR11-11



## **Meeting Summary**

In addition to the items in the press release, the Board also provided guidance to the Technical Committee regarding which total allowable catch levels (TAC) it would like to review stock projections for at its August Board meeting. The Board recommended the following nine stock projections.

1. status quo TAC of 187,880 mt
2. 5% increase
3. 10% increase
4. 20% increase
5. 30% increase
6. 40% increase
7. TAC that results in 50% probability of being below F target in 2017
8. TAC that results in 55% probability of being below F target in 2017
9. TAC that results in 60% probability of being below F target in 2017

The Technical Committee will work between the May and August Board meetings to complete the stock projection runs and provide information to the Board about how each TAC level will impact the stock relative to the 2015 benchmark stock assessment reference points. The Board will use the stock projections at its August meeting to establish a TAC for the 2017 fishing season.

The Biological Ecological Reference Points Workgroup provided an update to the Board regarding the timeline for multispecies modeling approaches designed to provide ecological reference points. The Workgroup intends complete an assessment of these modeling approaches by the end of 2019, which is in line with the 5-year trigger for a benchmark assessment, but flexibility may be necessary if complications arise. The Biological Ecological Reference Points Workgroup will continue to provide progress reports to the Board at the Spring and Annual ASMFC meeting weeks detailing the progress made on developing ecological reference points.

The Board also accepted the 2016 Fishery Management Plan Review detailing the results of the 2015 fishing year and implementation of Amendment 2 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. Total 2015 landings excluding bycatch was 410.6 million pounds, 1% below the coastwide total allowable catch (TAC) of 414.2 million pounds established by the Board. In 2015, the reduction fishery harvested 316.2 million pounds while the bait fishery harvested approximately 92.5 million pounds. A total of 5.9 million pounds were harvested under the 6,000 pound bycatch allowance with a majority of the landings coming from pound nets in Maryland and PRFC and anchored/staked gill nets in Virginia. Bycatch accounted for 1.4% of the total coastwide landings, but does not count towards the TAC. The Board also approved *de minimis* status for New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Lastly, the Board elected Russ Allen as vice-chair. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703-842-0740.

## **Motions**

### **Main Motion**

**Motion to add New York as an eligible state to the episodic event set aside program.**

Motion made by Mr. Gilmore and seconded by Mr. Simpson. Motion amended.

**Motion to Amend**

**Motion to amend to cap New York to 1 million pounds of the episodic event set aside for 2016.**

Motion made by Mr. Stockwell and seconded by Mr. White. Motion passes (15 in favor, 2 abstention).

**Main Motion as Amended**

**Motion to add New York as an eligible state to the episodic event set aside program and cap New York to 1 million pounds of the episodic event set aside in 2016.**

Motion passes (Roll Call Vote: In favor – ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, DE, MD, PRFC, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL; Opposed – PA; Abstentions – NMFS, USFWS).

**Motion to approve Addendum I for public comment as presented today.**

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

**Motion to accept the 2016 FMP review and approve *de minimis* status for New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.**

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

**Move to nominate Russ Allen to the vice-chair of the Atlantic Menhaden Board.**

Motion made by Ms. Patterson and seconded by Mr. Gilmore. Motion carries.

**INTERSTATE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY BOARD (MAY 4, 2016)**

***Meeting Summary***

Commission Chair Doug Grout updated the ISFMP Policy Board on the actions of the Executive Committee (see Executive Committee meeting summary). Brian Hooker updated the Board on the recent activities of the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management Atlantic Offshore Renewable Energy Program Activity. This update included offshore wind energy projects in Southern New England/New York Bight and Mid-Atlantic Bight, and offshore wind energy projects and marine hydrokinetic energy projects in the South Atlantic Bight.

Gregg Waugh, Executive Director of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, presented an overview of the current status of the cobia fishery to provide background on the Council's request to have the Commission either jointly or complementarily manage cobia with the Council. The Commission has committed to exploring options for the development of an interstate fishery management plan (FMP) for cobia. The Policy Board directed the South Atlantic Board to develop alternatives for developing an FMP that is either joint, complementary, or exclusively managed by the Commission in order to determine what type of FMP is the best way to move forward.

The Commission will send a letter to President Obama requesting a public process be followed if a New England waters deep water National Monument is considered. The Commission's preference is for the Council process be used to consider protection of the ecosystems within these deep waters. If the President uses the Antiquities Act to protect deep sea corals, the Commission requests the designated area be limited to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected. Additionally, the Commission requests the area be limited to depths greater than approximately 900 meters and encompass any or all of the region seaward of this line out to the outer limit of the EEZ. Further, the Commission asks that only bottom tending fishing effort be prohibited in the

area and all other mid water/surface fishing methods (recreational and commercial) be allowed to continue to use the area.

The Commission held a Climate Change Workshop earlier in the week with two objectives: (1) highlight new climate and fisheries science tools and seek Commissioner feedback on those tools and (2) discuss how managers adapt the management process in the face of climate change. The Policy Board created a Climate Change Working Group comprised of Commissioners, technical support staff, federal partners, and other interested parties. The Working Group will be tasked with developing science, policy, and management strategies to assist the Commission in adapting its management to changes in species abundance and distribution resulting from climate change impacts.

The Assessment Science and Management and Science Committees provided an update regarding their joint meeting in April. A Risk and Uncertainty Policy Workgroup was formed and a request was made to the Policy Board to add Commissioner membership. The goal of the Workgroup will be to develop a policy to account for both scientific and management uncertainty in the Commission's decision making process and determine an acceptable level of risk. The Board also reviewed and approved changes to the stock assessment schedule. Tautog and Atlantic striped bass will undergo an assessment update in 2016. The American eel assessment will be updated in 2017, while the weakfish assessment will be updated in 2018. The Biological Ecological Reference Points Workgroup will be completing an Atlantic Menhaden benchmark stock assessment in 2019. The river herring assessment update will be completed in 2017 so its results may be used by NOAA as it revisits its Endangered Species Act listing determination in early 2018. The American shad assessment update was moved to 2018 to spread out and ease the workload of the participating technical committee/stock assessment subcommittee members, who will be conducting both the river herring and Amendment shad assessment updates. The Board recommended that the prioritized species for peer review by the 2018 Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee be as follows: 1. Atlantic striped bass, 2. summer flounder, and 3. black sea bass.

The Law Enforcement Committee presented highlights from its meeting (see Law Enforcement Committee meeting summary) including tags types for a commercial tagging program for tautog, American lobster trap enforcement in offshore waters, and summer flounder enforcement.

For more information, please contact Toni Kerns, ISFMP Director, at [tkerns@asmfc.org](mailto:tkerns@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

**On behalf of the American Lobster Board move the Commission send a letter to the President of the United States of America, regarding the following:**

- **The preference of the Commission would be for the current NE Council coral management process to continue without Presidential use of the Antiquities Act to protect deep sea corals.**
- **Should a President (CEQ) decide to designate a New England waters deep water Monument prior to the end of his Presidency, the Commission requests that any areas so designated, be limited to the smallest area compatible with the proper care and management of the objects to be protected, as required by the Antiquities Act.**
- **The area be limited to depths greater than approximately 900 meters and encompass any or all of the region seaward of this line out to the outer limit of the EEZ. That only bottom tending fishing effort be prohibited in the area and that all other mid water/surface fishing methods (recreational and commercial) be allowed to continue to use the area.**

- **That the public and affected user groups be allowed to review and comment on any specific proposal prior to its implementation.**

Motion made by Mr. Borden. Motion carries (15 in favor, 3 abstentions).

#### **Main Motion**

**Move the ISFMP Policy Board to direct the South Atlantic Board to develop alternatives for a fishery management plan for joint, complementary and exclusive jurisdiction for the Commission.**

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Estes. Motion amended.

#### **Motion to Amend**

**Motion to amend that the South Atlantic Board will bring a recommendation to the Commission through the ISFMP Policy Board.**

Motion made by Mr. Woodward and seconded by Mr. Fote. Motion carries (15 in favor).

#### **Main Motion as Amended**

**Move the ISFMP Policy Board to direct the South Atlantic Board to develop alternatives for a fishery management plan for joint, complementary and exclusive jurisdiction for the Commission. The South Atlantic Board will bring a recommendation to the Commission through the ISFMP Policy Board.**

Motion carries (15 in favor).

#### **Move to approve the assessment schedule as modified today.**

Motion made by Mr. Miller and seconded by Hasbrouck. Motion carries by consensus.

### **BUSINESS SESSION (MAY 4, 2016)**

#### ***Meeting Summary***

During its Business Session, the Commission unanimously agreed to bring the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) under the Commission's governance structure, with ACCSP becoming a Commission program. Prior to this change, ACCSP was an independent program with the Commission, as one of ACCSP's partners, providing administrative support and office space for ACCSP. ACCSP governance was reviewed and modified based on the recommendation of the 2012 Independent Program Review Panel and the support of both the ACCSP Executive Committee and Coordinating Council. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, ASMFC Executive Director, at [rbeal@asmfc.org](mailto:rbeal@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

#### ***Motions***

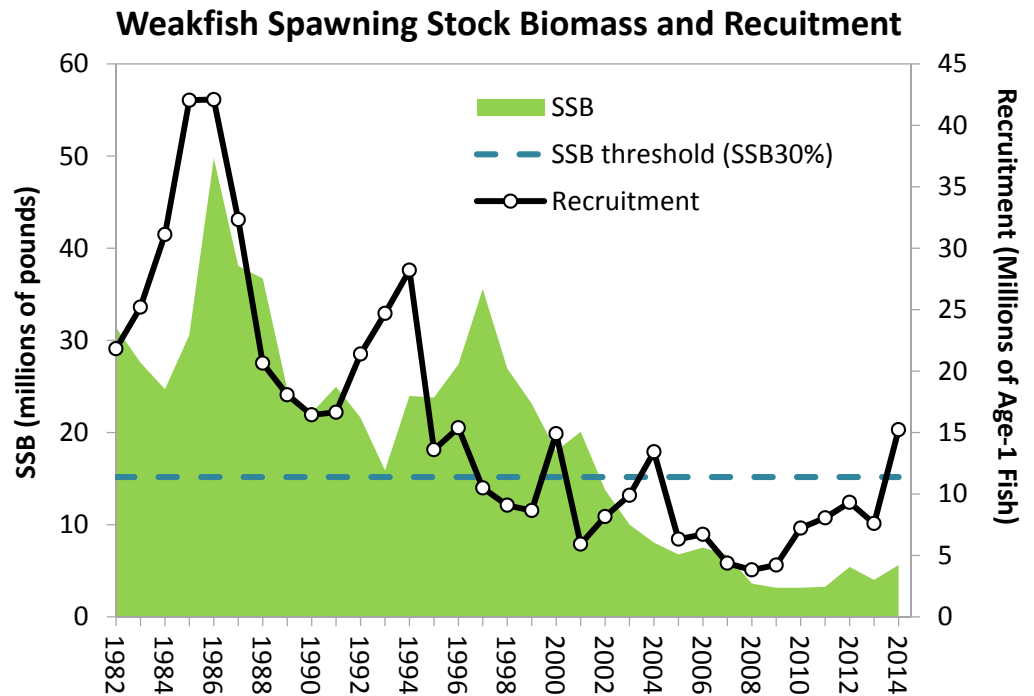
No motions made.

## WEAKFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2016)

### **Press Release**

### **Weakfish Assessment Indicate Stock is Depleted and Overfishing Not Occurring**

Alexandria, VA – The 2016 Weakfish Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicate weakfish is depleted and has been for the past 13 years. Under the new reference points, the stock is considered depleted when the stock is below a spawning stock biomass (SSB) threshold of 30% (15.17 million pounds). In 2014, SSB was 5.62 million pounds. While the assessment indicates some positive signs in the weakfish stock in the most recent years, with a slight increase in SSB and total abundance, the stock is still well below the SSB threshold.



\* The stock assessment assumes 10% of the released fish died as a result of being caught and released.

The assessment indicates natural mortality (e.g., the rate at which fish die because of natural causes such as predation, disease, starvation) has been increasing

since the mid-1990s, from approximately 0.16 in the early 1980s to an average of 0.93 from 2007-2014. Therefore, even though fishing mortality has been at low levels in recent years, the weakfish population has been experiencing very high levels of total mortality (which includes fishing mortality and natural mortality), preventing the stock from recovering.

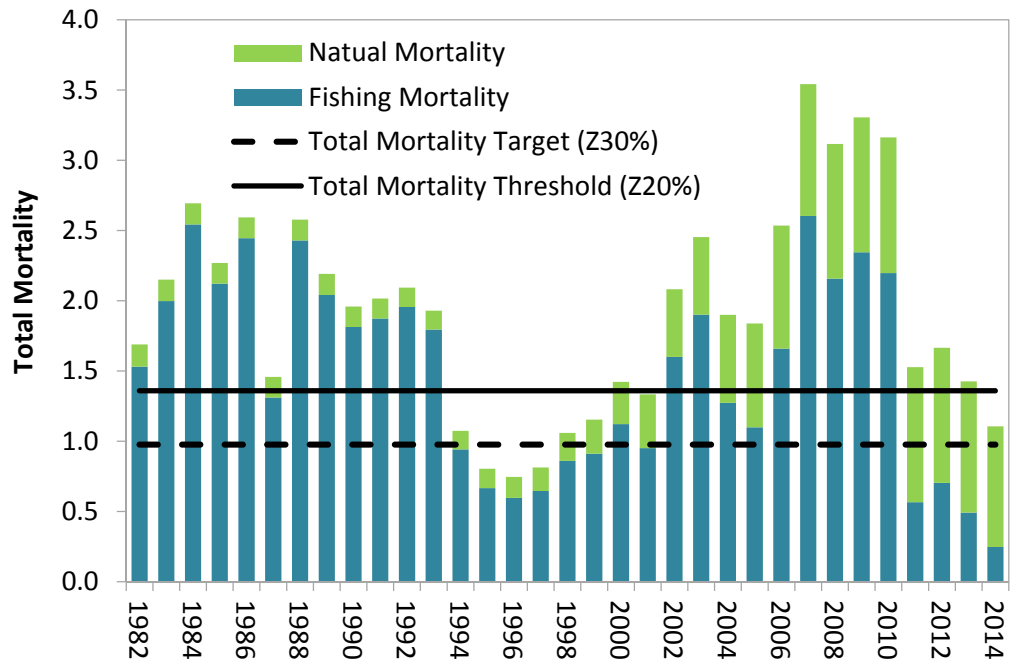
To better address the issues impacting the weakfish resource, the Technical Committee recommends the use of total mortality (Z) benchmarks to prevent an increase in fishing pressure when natural mortality is high. The assessment proposes a total mortality target of 0.93 and threshold of 1.36. Total mortality in 2014 was 1.11, which is above the threshold but below the target, indicating that total mortality is still high but within acceptable limits. This is the first time in 13 years that Z has been below the threshold, and additional years of data are needed to determine whether estimates in Z in the most recent years will remain below the threshold.

Weakfish commercial landings have dramatically declined since the early 1980s, dropping from over 19 million pounds landed in 1982 to roughly 200,000 pounds in 2014. The majority of landings occur in North Carolina and Virginia and, since the early 1990s, the primary gear used has been gillnets. Discarding of weakfish by commercial fishermen is known to occur, especially in the mixed species

trawl fishery, and the discard mortality is assumed to be 100%. Discards peaked in the 1990s but have since declined as the result of management measures and a decline in stock abundance.

Like the commercial sector, catch in the recreational fishery has declined from over 11 million pounds in 1983 to roughly 77,000 pounds in 2014. Recreational harvest has been dominated by New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Recreational discard mortality, which is assumed to be 10%, has decreased with recreational catch.

### Contributions of Fishing and Natural Mortality to Weakfish Total Mortality



The Board accepted the stock assessment and peer review report for management use, including its proposed new reference points for both SSB and Z. Given the weakfish management program is already highly restrictive with a one fish recreational creel limit, 100 pound commercial trip limit, and 100 pound commercial bycatch limit, and the assessment showed a slight increase in SSB, the Board took no management action at this time. It directed the Technical Committee to prepare for an assessment update in two years, at which time the Board will review the results and consider possible management action.

A more detailed description of the stock assessment results is available on the Commission’s website at [http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file//572b74a22016WeakfishAssessmentOverview\\_Final.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file//572b74a22016WeakfishAssessmentOverview_Final.pdf). The final assessment and peer review report will be posted to the Commission website, [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org), by mid-May on the weakfish webpage. For more information on the stock assessment, please contact Katie Drew, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, at [kdrew@asmfc.org](mailto:kdrew@asmfc.org); and for more information on weakfish management, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org).

###

PR11-12

**Motions**

**Move to approve the 2016 Weakfish Benchmark Assessment and Peer Review Report for management use.**

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion passes without objection.

## **COASTAL SHARKS MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2016)**

### ***Press Release***

### **ASMFC Coastal Sharks Board Approves Smooth Dogfish Draft Addendum for Public Comment**

Alexandria, VA – The Commission’s Coastal Sharks Management Board approved Draft Addendum IV to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Coastal Sharks for public comment. The purpose of the Draft Addendum is to maintain consistency between federal and state FMPs, where possible, and to better incorporate into state regulations the intent of the limited fins-attached exception for smooth dogfish in the Shark Conservation Act of 2010.

Under current regulations, commercial fishermen with only a state commercial fishing license can land smooth dogfish with corresponding fins removed from the carcass. The Draft Addendum proposes amending the FMP to allow smooth dogfish carcasses to be landed with corresponding fins removed from the carcass as long as the total retained catch (all species), by weight, is composed of at least 25 percent smooth dogfish. This option is consistent with the federal catch composition requirement, which was included in NOAA Fisheries’ final rule for Amendment 9.

It is anticipated some states will hold public hearings on Draft Addendum IV; a subsequent press release on the public hearing schedule and Draft Addendum availability will be distributed once state hearings have been scheduled. For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 703.842.0740 or [aharp@asmfc.org](mailto:aharp@asmfc.org).

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PR16-13

### ***Motions***

#### **Move to approve Addendum IV for public comment.**

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Adler. Motion passes without objection.

## **SOUTH ATLANTIC STATE/FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BOARD (MAY 5, 2016)**

### ***Meeting Summary***

The South Atlantic State/Federal Management Board met to review the results of the 2016 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report. A primary goal of the assessment, which began in 2014, has been to accurately estimate abundance and biomass in order to determine whether or not the stock is overfished. To achieve this goal, the Stock Assessment Subcommittee (SAS) adopted a new modeling framework which allows for the incorporation of additional data. Through the assessment process, the SAS encountered several challenges in developing a stable model which estimated plausible stock conditions. These challenges persisted through the 2015 SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) Peer Review. As a result, the Peer Review Workshop took on a collaborative approach in which the Peer Review Panelists provided suggestions on how to improve model performance. The SAS was able to successfully incorporate these comments and produce stable models which were desk-reviewed

in April 2016. Preliminary results of these models suggest that overfishing is occurring in both the northern (NJ-NC) and southern (SC-FL) regions.

Given concerns over the low spawning potential ratios estimated for both stocks, the Board charged the Technical Committee with several tasks to ensure the results of the model are accurate. These include evaluating appropriate tag return rates for the red drum stocks, investigating potential attributes of red drum life history which may confound the model results, conducting continuity runs, and evaluating the appropriateness of the current reference points. The Technical Committee will provide a report to the Board on these tasks in October.

The Board also reviewed an annual report from North Carolina regarding Spanish mackerel landings in the commercial pound net fishery, as required by Addendum I to the Omnibus Amendment for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout. The Addendum reduces the minimum size for Spanish mackerel from 12" to 11.5" between July and September. The report illustrated that in 2015, 7% of North Carolina's Spanish mackerel catch from the commercial pound net fishery was between 11.5" and 11.99". Finally, the Board elected Pat Geer (GA) as Vice-Chair.

For more information, please contact Megan Ware, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at [mware@asmfc.org](mailto:mware@asmfc.org) or 703.842.0740.

### ***Motions***

#### **Main Motion**

**Move to approve the stock assessment and peer review for management advice.**

Motion made by Dr. Laney and seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion postponed.

#### **Motion to Postpone**

**Motion to postpone the approval of the stock assessment and peer review for management advice until the following tasks can be completed by the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Subcommittee:**

- **Evaluate if current biological reference point types and values are appropriate for red drum given the specie's life history**
- **Investigate the feasibility of an F-based reference point for juvenile red drum**
- **Evaluate how red drum life history and fishery management measures affect the validity of age-based models**
- **Evaluate whether the South region continuity run of the statistical catch and age model can be made informative for management and, if yes, complete a continuity run**
- **Evaluate if a North region continuity run of the statistical catch at age model would be informative for management purposes and, if yes, complete a continuity run**
- **Evaluate tag return rates for each region and determine if tag return data should be incorporated into a new run of the SS3 model**

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Ms. Fegley. Motion passes (10 in favor).

**Move to nominate Pat Gear as Vice Chair to the South Atlantic Board.**

Motion made by Mr. Boyles and seconded by Mr. Allen. Motion passes without objection.