



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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ASMFC Releases Report on Sciaenid Fish Habitat

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has released the 14th report in its Habitat Management Series entitled, *Atlantic Sciaenid Habitats: A Review of Utilization, Threats and Recommendations for Conservation, Management and Research*. Prepared by ASMFC staff, sciaenid experts, and a subset of the Commission's Habitat Committee, the report is the most comprehensive compilation of habitat information to date on Commission-managed and other common sciaenid species found throughout the Western Atlantic. These species include Atlantic croaker, black drum, red drum, spot, spotted seatrout, weakfish, northern kingfish, southern kingfish and Gulf kingfish. The report provides a habitat description for all stages of each species' life cycle, their associated Essential Fish Habitats and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (when applicable), threats and uncertainties to their habitats, and recommendations for habitat management and research. It was developed to serve as a resource for fisheries managers to use when amending existing fishery management plans.

Sciaenids are found throughout the Western Atlantic Ocean from Maine to Mexico, in shallow coastal waters and larger bays and estuaries, including their tributaries. They utilize a variety of habitats throughout their life stages, including estuaries, salt marshes, freshwater marshes, oyster reefs, sea grasses and mud banks/shores. Because of the way different species of sciaenids use various types of habitats throughout their life, several different habitats are key for maintaining healthy populations.

Estuarine habitats are particularly important to many sciaenids at every life stage. In the Mid-Atlantic Bight, as many as 14 species can be present in estuaries as larvae, juveniles, or adults over the course of a year. Weakfish, for example, use estuaries as primary spawning habitat, while Atlantic croaker and spot use them as nurseries and seasonal adult foraging grounds. Young sciaenids play important roles as both predators and prey in these habitats.

Temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen vary considerably in estuarine environments and these factors are known to affect sciaenid growth rates, spawning, and spatial and temporal distribution. As a group, sciaenids are habitat generalists rather than specialists and may therefore be relatively resilient to changes in environmental factors. However, Atlantic coast estuaries have been profoundly altered. Despite their ability to take advantage of a range of habitats, sciaenids are not immune to habitat degradation or suboptimal conditions, especially in the face of climate change.

continued, see SCIAENID FISH HABITAT on page 7



Photo (c) Florida Sea Grant

Upcoming Meetings

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

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Chair

James J. Gilmore, Jr. (NY)
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Robert E. Beal
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Patrick A. Campfield
Science Director

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May 8-11

ASMFC Spring Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA

May 18 (10 AM - Noon)

Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar> for more details.

May 23 (10:30 AM - Noon)

Atlantic Herring Days Out Meeting, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, 225 Main Street, Durham, NH

May 24 (8 AM - 5 PM)

River Herring Stock Assessment Subcommittee, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA

May 30 (1 - 3 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar> for more details.

June 5-9

Advanced Stock Assessment Training Course on Stock Synthesis Modeling, ASMFC Offices, 1050 North Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA

June 6-8

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Main, 100 Main Street, Norfolk, VA

June 7 (4-6 PM)

Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel, Maine Department of Marine Resources, Room #118, 32 Blossom Lane, Augusta, ME

June 9 (1 - 3 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden Stock Assessment Subcommittee Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar> for more details.

June 12-16

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sawgrass Marriott, 1000 PGA Tour Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

June 15 (9 AM - 5 PM)

Atlantic Menhaden Technical Committee Review of 2017 Stock Assessment Update, Homewood Suites by Hilton - Richmond Airport, 5996 Audubon Drive, Sandston, VA

August 1-3

ASMFC 2017 Summer Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA

August 8-10

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Courtyard Marriott, 21 North Juniper Street, Philadelphia, PA

September 11-15

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

September 26-28

New England Fishery Management Council, Beauport, Gloucester, MA

October 10-12

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Hyatt Long Island East End, 451 East Main Street, Riverhead, NY



A Look Back Over 20 Years

April 16th marked my 20 year anniversary with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. I joined the Commission as a 20-hour-a-week intern with the thought that this would allow me to gain some experience until something else came along. Well, as they say, the rest is history. It's unbelievable how quickly 20 years can pass. To put things into perspective, when I arrived at the Commission Jack Dunnigan was Executive Director, George Lapointe was ISFMP Director, Dr. Lisa Kline was Director of Research and Statistics, and Laura Leach was Director of Finance and Administration; total staff size was a little over a dozen people. The mandates and provisions of the

Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act) had been fully integrated into the Commission's fisheries management process and fishery management plans were being revised to comply with the new mandates. The Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) had been signed and development of the program had begun. The Commission was just beginning to explore the inclusion of Legislators and Governor Appointees on species management boards, with state delegations casting one vote per state/jurisdiction. The Commission budget had grown to more than \$2 million to meet the increasing demands

placed upon the Commission and the states as a result of the Atlantic Coastal Act.

Over the next 20 years, as my responsibilities grew within the Commission from intern, to FMP Coordinator, to ISFMP Director and ultimately Executive Director, it was a great pleasure being a part of the Commission's growth and evolution. I had the honor of learning from two talented Executive Directors – Jack Dunnigan and Vince O'Shea – and countless Commissioners, as well as state and federal agency staff, who have all humbled me by their hard work and dedication to the Commission and the sustainable management of Atlantic coastal fisheries. I have witnessed

the tremendous growth of our fisheries management, science, data collection and habitat programs. The number of species managed by the Commission either solely or through joint/complementary management increased from 16 species to 27. Increasing demands were placed on our management and science programs to address predator/prey interactions, ecosystem-based fisheries management, the impacts of a rapidly changing marine environment, and the ever present issue of resource allocation among the states and between user groups. The Commission continued to expand science-based capabilities through introductory, intermediate and advanced stock assessment training courses for state biologists. Additionally, the Commission added three stock assessment scientists to its staff to provide much needed support to overextended state and federal scientists. Fishery-independent data collections efforts were strengthened with the establishment of the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program to address the lack of adequate survey coverage in the Mid-Atlantic Bight. ACCSP evolved from a concept to a reality, truly becoming the principal source of dependable and timely marine fishery statistics for Atlantic coast fisheries. The Commission's Habitat Program and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership continued to play important roles in advancing fish habitat conservation and enhancement through research, education, outreach and advocacy. Our outreach program expanded its coverage and reach to more fully inform our members, partners, Congress and stakeholders of our programs and activities. Throughout it all, the Commission's finance and human resources department, met all the administrative and HR challenges thrown its way, enabling the Commission to be financially sound and operationally efficient.

While the people and issues may have changed over the years, one thing remains the same – the profound commitment of our 45 Commissioners to do what is best for the resources under their stewardship while maximizing the social and economic benefits to their stakeholders. I would be remiss if I did not also recognize Congress and our federal partners for their unwavering support of the Commission and cooperative interstate fisheries management.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me these past 20 years. I am excited what for lies ahead. Through the exceptional leadership of our Commissioners, dedicated and talented staff (here at the Commission and within state and federal agencies), and passionate and invested stakeholders, I am confident we can continue to achieve great things and successfully tackle whatever challenges lie ahead.

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Species Profile: Summer Flounder

Joint Management Seeks to Improve Stock Condition

Introduction

Highly valued by both commercial fishermen and recreational fishing enthusiasts from Massachusetts to North Carolina, summer flounder are often considered to be the most important flounder along the Atlantic coast. In addition to commercial fishing, businesses such as recreational charters, party boats, bait and tackle stores, and any number of businesses associated with boating and angling view summer flounder as an essential component of their businesses. Because of this importance there has been considerable debate and concern over the status of the resource and the need for more restrictive measures to manage the recreational fishery.

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), which jointly manage summer flounder, set the 2017 specifications at a 3.77 million pound recreational harvest limit (RHL) and a 5.66 million pound commercial quota. Both represent substantial reductions from the 2016 fishing season and respond to the findings of the 2016 stock assessment update, which indicates the resource is not overfished but is experiencing overfishing. To constrain recreational harvest to RHL, states are implementing an increase in the minimum size limit by one-inch and a decrease in possession limits to no more than 4 fish. Currently, the need to improve the stock's condition while balancing the economic significance of the species to both commercial industry and recreational sector presents a difficult challenge to managers.

Life History

Summer flounder are found in inshore and offshore waters from Nova Scotia, Canada to the east coast of Florida. In the U.S., they are most abundant in the Mid-Atlantic region from Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Cape Fear, North Carolina. Summer flounder usually begin to spawn at age two or three at lengths of about 10 inches. Spawning occurs in the fall and winter while the fish are offshore. Spawning migration is linked to sexual maturity, with the oldest and largest fish migrating first. As in their seasonal migrations, spawning summer flounder in the northern portion of the range spawn and move offshore (depths of 120 to 600 feet) earlier than those in the southern part of the range. Larvae migrate to inshore coastal and estuarine areas from October to May. The larvae, or fry, move to bottom waters upon reaching the coast and spend their first year in bays and estuaries. At the end of their first year, some juveniles join the adult offshore migration. Recent research has indicated a shift in the center of biomass northward that have been linked to an expansion of age structure of the population and possibly to changes in sea surface temperature.

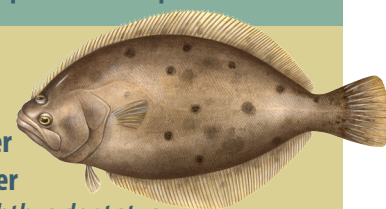
Adults spend most of their life on or near the sea bottom burrowing in the sandy substrate. Flounder lie in ambush and wait for their prey. They are quick and efficient predators with well-developed teeth allowing them to capture small fish, squid, sea worms, shrimp, and other crustaceans. A great fishing technique to take advantage of their ambush behavior is to fish close to bottom with moving bait.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

Summer flounder are one of the most sought after commercial and recreational fish along the Atlantic coast, with total landings at approximately 15.45 million pounds in 2015. Using the base years of 1980 to 1989, the current plan allocates the summer flounder quota on a 60/40 percent basis to commercial and recreational fisheries, respectively.

Two major commercial trawl fisheries exist — a winter offshore and a summer inshore. Summer flounder are also taken by pound nets and gillnets in estuarine waters. Throughout the 1980s, commercial landings ranged from 21 to 38 million pounds, reaching peak landings of approximately 38 million pounds in 1984. By 1990, landings

Species Snapshot



Summer Flounder
Paralichthys dentatus

Management Unit: Massachusetts to North Carolina

Interesting Facts

- Left-eyed flatfish (both eyes on the left side of its body when viewed from above with the top fin facing up).
- Fluke begin with eyes on both sides of their body; the right eye migrates to the left side in 20-32 days.
- Summer flounder are called chameleons of the sea because of their ability to match the color of the bottom on which they are found.

Largest Recorded: 24.2 pounds, 38.5" (Bradley, NJ, 2007)

Maximum Age: 14 years old

Age at Maturity: 50% mature by age 1; ~10" for males and ~11.5" for females.

Stock Status: Not overfished but experiencing overfishing



Photo (c) Open Boat Miss Montauk

reached a low of nine million pounds and have since fluctuated between nine and 17 million pounds. In 1993, the coastwide quota was implemented for the first time (set at 12.35 million pounds). Since then, commercial landings, which are limited by the quota, have ranged from 8.81 to 18.17 million pounds. 2015 commercial landings were estimated at 10.59 million pounds. The 2017 commercial quota of 5.66 million pounds will be the lowest in the history of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

Summer flounder are also highly prized in the recreational fishery, with anglers catching summer flounder from the shore, piers, and boats with hook and line. From 1980 through 2004, recreational harvest varied widely from a high of 27.97 million pounds in 1983 to a low of 3.14 million pounds in 1989. Starting in 1993, recreational harvest limits were implemented. From 1993 to 2011, harvest ranged from 5.11 million pounds to 12.48 million pounds. 2015 recreational harvest was estimated at 4.72 million pounds.

Stock Status

The 2016 stock assessment update indicates the summer flounder stock is not overfished but is experiencing overfishing. Fishing mortality exceeded its threshold by 26% (i.e., the level beyond which overfishing is occurring). The 2015 estimate of spawning stock biomass is at 58% of the biomass target, and only 16% above the threshold. These results appear to be driven largely by below-average recruitment (the number of fish that enter the population) from 2010 to 2015. Additionally, indices of abundance from state and federal surveys have indicated declines in abundance ranging from 9 to 97% from their most recent peaks (generally 2009 to 2012). The 2016 assessment update estimated biomass has been trending down since 2010.

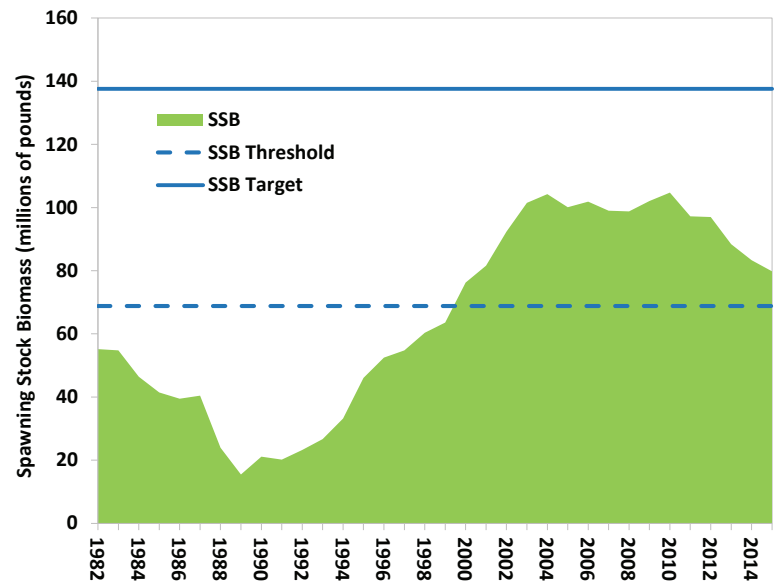
The next benchmark stock assessment is tentatively scheduled for completion in 2018. In addition to the current modeling approach, scientists will explore using a sex-specific model. The sex-specific approach would allow scientists to independently assess female and male summer flounder based on their different life history characteristics, such as how fast they grow. The results of the assessment could be used to determine the potential impacts of various management measures (e.g., minimum size) on the summer flounder population.

Atlantic Coastal Management

The Commission approved the first Summer Flounder FMP in 1982, followed by a similar FMP approved by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in 1988. Since then, both groups have made significant revisions to the plan, from allowing states to craft regional recreational management measures through conservation equivalency, to instituting accountability measures for evaluating annual landings to coastwide catch limits. The commercial fishery is managed by annual state-by-state quotas that are controlled through trip limits, gear specifications, and permit requirements. On the recreational side, annual harvest limits are managed through the implementation of minimum size limits, possession limits, and season lengths. In recent years, a regional management approach has allowed states within a region to implement consistent measures and improve equitable access to the

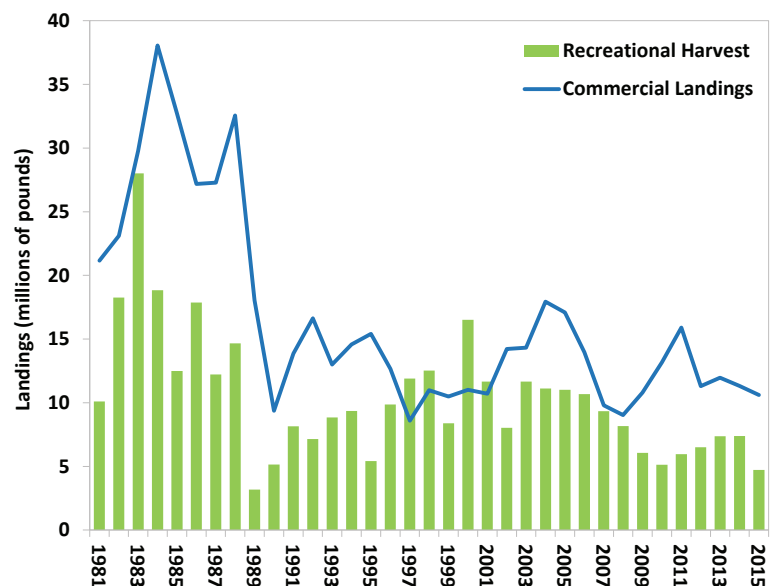
Summer Flounder Spawning Stock Biomass

Source: Northeast Fisheries Science Center Stock Assessment Update, 2016



Summer Flounder Commercial Landings & Recreational Harvest

Source: NMFS Fisheries Statistics Division, 2016



continued, see SUMMER FLOUNDER on page 8

ASMFC Spring Meeting

May 8 - 11, 2017

The Westin Alexandria
400 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, VA
703.253.8600

Final Agenda

The agenda is subject to change. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

Board/Section meeting proceedings will be broadcast daily via webinar beginning May 8th at 1:00 p.m. and continuing daily until the conclusion of the meeting (expected to be 3:00 p.m.) on Thursday May 11th. The webinar will allow registrants to listen to board/section deliberations and view presentations and motions as they occur. Please go to <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/936308200287732994> to register.

MONDAY, MAY 8

8 AM - Noon Climate Change Workgroup

- Continue to Draft White Papers on Science and Policy Strategies to Assist the Commission with Adapting its Management to Changes in Species Abundance and Distribution Resulting from Climate Change Impacts

1 - 2:30 PM Atlantic Herring Section

- Public Comment
- Consider Addendum I for Final Approval **Final Action**
 - Review Options (*A. Harp*)
 - Public Comment Summary (*A. Harp*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*J. Kaelin*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
 - Consider Final Approval of Addendum I
- Review Scoping Comments on a Tiered Weekly Landing Limit **Possible Action**
- Discuss 2016 Spawning Closure Pilot Program (*R. Zobel*) **Final Action**
 - Consider Permanent Implementation of the GSI30 Based Forecast System
- Consider Approval of 2017 Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Reports (*A. Harp*) **Action**
- Review and Populate the Atlantic Herring Advisory Panel **Possible Action**

2:45 - 5:15 PM American Lobster Management Board

- Public Comment
- Discuss New England Fishery Management Council Deep-Sea Coral Amendment **Possible Action**
 - Overview of Deep-Sea Coral Amendment Management Alternatives (*M. Bachman*)
- American Lobster Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Subcommittee Report (*M. Ware*)
- Update on Development of American Lobster Draft Addendum XXVI (*M. Ware*)
- Consider American Lobster Addendum XXV for Final Approval **Final Action**
 - Review Options (*M. Ware*)
 - Public Comment Summary (*M. Ware*)
 - Law Enforcement Committee Report (*M. Robson*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*G. Moore*)
 - Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXV

Public Comment Guidelines

In order to ensure a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has established the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

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

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

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

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

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

2. Comments received by **5 PM on Tuesday, May 2, 2017** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.

3. Following the May 2nd deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

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

Increasingly dense human populations along our coastlines threaten the health of estuaries and coastal waters, including sciaenid habitats. Widespread development, beach renourishment, dredging, overfishing, coastal armoring, pollution, and other human impacts have significantly altered the physical and chemical environments of estuarine and marine waters. Changes in hydrologic processes and runoff characteristics can increase turbidity and sedimentation and decrease light transmittance, which may lead to the loss of submerged aquatic vegetation. Human-caused alterations to the estuarine environment have been linked to changes in hydrography and salinity regimes, as well as food web modification, which can eventually reduce the quality of habitat for sciaenids and other estuarine-dependent fish.

The Commission would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the report: Jay Odell, Brian Boutin and Kate M. Wilke with The Nature Conservancy; Douglas H. Adams and Kent Smith with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; William Collier II, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council; Alison Deary, University of Southern Mississippi; James A. Johnson, Jr., North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality; Stephen R. Midway, Louisiana State University; January Murray, Georgia Department of Natural Resources; and Lisa N. Havel and Melissa W. Yuen, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The report is available online at http://www.asmfc.org/files/Habitat/HMS14_AtlanticSciaenidHabitats_Winter2017.pdf. Species-specific chapters are also available on the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, on the respective species pages (on the left navigation bar under Quick Links).

For more information, please contact Lisa Havel, Habitat Coordinator, at LHavel@asmfc.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 9

8 - 10:15 AM American Lobster Management Board (continued)

- Consider Addendum XXV for Final Approval **Final Action**
- Consider Inconsistencies between State and Federal Regulations **Possible Action**
 - Addenda XXI and XXII Provisions in Federal Waters (*M. Ware*)
 - Lobster Conservation Management Area 4 Season Closure (*M. Ware*)

8:30 AM - 5 PM

Law Enforcement Committee (*A portion of this meeting will be a closed session for Law Enforcement Committee members only to discuss ongoing enforcement activities*)

- Public Comment
- Review and Update of Regional Tautog Management Options
- Review 2017 Action Plan Items
- Report on Atlantic Herring Addendum I **Final Action**
- Discuss Storm Preparedness, Training and Equipment
- Discuss New or Emerging ASMFC Species Management Issues
- Review and Discuss American Lobster Management Issues
- Review and Discuss Ongoing Enforcement Activities (**Closed Session**)
- Federal Agency Reports
- State Agency Reports
- Discuss NOAA Priority-setting and Planning for ASMFC Input
- Update Survey for Enforceability Guidelines
- Discuss ISFMP Species Management Issues
- Develop Orientation Process for New LEC Members

10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Tautog Management Board

- Public Comment
- Review Consistent Management Measures by Region (*J. McNamee, A. Harp*)
 - Massachusetts/Rhode Island
 - Long Island Sound
 - New Jersey/New York Bight
 - Delaware/Maryland/Virginia
- Consider Draft Amendment 1 for Public Comment **Action**
 - Review Management Options (*A. Harp*)
 - Law Enforcement Report (*J. Snellbaker*)
 - New York Letter to the Board Regarding the Long Island Sound Boundaries (*J. Gilmore*)

1 - 3:15 PM**Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Draft Addendum V for Public Comment (*M. Appelman*) **Action**
 - Technical Committee Report (*N. Lengyel*)
- Consider Approval of 2018 Atlantic Striped Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment Terms of Reference (*K. Drew*) **Action**
- Board Guidance to Stock Assessment Subcommittee Regarding Development of Biological Reference Points for the 2018 Benchmark Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*)

3:30 - 5:45**Atlantic Menhaden Management Board**

- Public Comment
- Consider Hilborn et al. 2017 Paper for Technical Review (*R. Ballou*) **Possible Action**
- Biological Ecological Reference Points Work Group Progress Report (*S. Madsen*)
- Update on Draft Amendment 3 (*M. Ware*) **Possible Action**

continued, see SPRING MEETING FINAL AGENDA on page 10

Proposed Management Actions

Northern Shrimp Section Approves Public Hearing Document on Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment

The Northern Shrimp Section has released Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Northern Shrimp for public consideration and input. The states of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on the Draft Amendment. The details of those hearings follow.

Maine Department of Marine Resources

Wednesday, June 7, 2017 at 6 PM

Maine Department of Marine Resources
Conference Room #118
32 Blossom Lane
Augusta, Maine
Contact: Terry Stockwell at 207.624.6553

Thursday, June 8, 2017 at 6 PM

Ellsworth City Hall Conference Room
1 City Hall Plaza
Ellsworth, Maine
Contact: Terry Stockwell at 207.624.6553

New Hampshire Fish and Game

Tuesday, June 6, 2017 at 7 PM

Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwyn Road
Portsmouth, New Hampshire
Contact: Doug Grout at 603.868.1095

Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries

Monday, June 5, 2017 at 6 PM

MA DMF Annisquam River Station
30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, Massachusetts
Contact: Kelly Whitmore at 978.282.0308

The Section initiated Draft Amendment 3 with the intention of considering a limited entry program to address overcapacity in the fishery. In the 2010 and 2011 fishing seasons, increased fishing effort and untimely reporting resulted in early season closures and an overharvest of the total allowable catch (TAC).

The 2012 fishing season was further restricted, resulting in a 21-day trawl

season and a 17-day trap season. In the 2013 fishing season, despite the fact that only 55% of the TAC was harvested, the fishing mortality rate (0.53) was estimated above the target (0.38). In December 2013, the Section established a moratorium for the 2014 fishing season due to recruitment failure and a collapsed stock. The moratorium was maintained each year, through 2017, in response to the continued depleted condition of the stock.

Due to the uncertainty about if and when the resource would rebuild and the fishery reopen, the Section shifted the focus of Draft Amendment 3 to consider measures to improve management of the northern shrimp fishery and resource. Proposed options in the Draft Amendment include state-by-state allocations and accountability measures to better manage effort in the fishery. The Draft Amendment also explores the mandatory use of size sorting grate systems to minimize harvest of small (presumably male) shrimp, as well as reporting measures to ensure all harvested shrimp are being reported.

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the Draft Amendment either by attending public hearings or providing written comments. The Draft Amendment can be obtained at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/NShrimpDraftAmd3_PublicComment.pdf or via the Commission's website, www.asmfc.org, under Public Input. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on June 21, 2017** and should be forwarded to Max Appelman, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at mappelman@asmfc.org (Subject line: Northern Shrimp).

For more information, please contact Max Appelman at mappelman@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

SUMMER FLOUNDER continued from page 8

resource. This approach has come with tradeoffs, where the boundary waters of neighboring regions have created situations where anglers are subject to different regulations while fishing within the same waterbody. The Commission is continuing seek solutions to address this dilemma.

In response to the findings of the 2016 stock assessment update, the Commission and the Council approved a 2017 RHL and commercial quota that was approximate 30% decrease from 2016. In taking this action, the Commission and Council seek to protect the resource and prevent it from being declared overfished. If the stock were to fall below the threshold, it would be considered overfished, requiring the development of a rebuilding plan to reduce fishing mortality and rebuild stock biomass.

The joint management of summer flounder through the Commission and Council continues to provide challenges to stakeholders wanting more flexibility, while also seeking to protect the resource from becoming overfished. Both groups continue to work on the development of a comprehensive amendment to the Summer Flounder FMP, focusing on possible changes to management of commercial fisheries as well as the goals and objectives of the FMP. Issues such as equitable access, state-by-state commercial allocation, permitting, and quota transfers will be considered. A public comment document is anticipated for release in 2018. Currently, recreational management strategies are being addressed outside of this amendment process.

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

Science Highlight: SEAMAP Releases 5-Year Management Plan

The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) has released its 2016-2020 Management Plan. Prepared by the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean components of SEAMAP, the Management Plan serves as a reference for official SEAMAP policies and procedures through 2020. The Plan also includes detailed information on SEAMAP activities and highlights how SEAMAP data meet critical needs for recent stock assessments and management decisions. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the Plan details how SEAMAP's core surveys have been impacted by level/declining funding. It identifies how expansions in funding could be used to refine existing assessments and advance the movement towards ecosystem-based management; ultimately, leading to more comprehensive fisheries management in the Southeast region.

SEAMAP is a cooperative state/federal/university program for the collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data and information in the Southeastern U.S. and



Photo (c) SEAMAP Caribbean

Caribbean. Representatives from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) jointly plan and conduct surveys of economically and ecologically important fish and shellfish species and the critical habitats that support them. Since 1982, SEAMAP has sponsored long-term standardized surveys that have become the backbone of fisheries and habitat management in the

Southeast and Caribbean. SEAMAP currently provides the only region-wide mechanism for monitoring long-term status and trends of populations and habitats within the region.

As a cooperative effort, SEAMAP monitors the distribution and abundance of fish and other marine resources from North Carolina through Texas and into the Caribbean. SEAMAP is intended to maximize the capability of fishery-independent and associated survey activities to satisfy data and information needs of living marine resource management and research organizations

See SEAMAP continued on page 10

SEAMAP CONTRIBUTIONS

Not only have SEAMAP data proven essential to stock assessments and management decisions but they have also answered important ecological questions, including:

- Assessing long-term trends in coastal marine species, thus providing data for linking population trends with changes in environmental conditions such as temperature changes, nutrient enrichment, and overfishing.
- Documenting and defining essential fish habitat in fishery management plans for the GMFMC, SAFMC, and CFMC.
- Long-term monitoring of juvenile red snapper abundances and providing necessary information for red snapper stock assessments and habitat requirements in the region.
- Identifying and verifying the recovery of Gulf and South Atlantic king mackerel stocks, leading to increased fishing quotas.
- Providing essential data to the international community regarding the impacts of longline fishing for Atlantic bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Determining population size structures, abundances, and necessary life history information for stock assessments of a variety of marine species.
- Evaluating the abundance and size distribution of penaeid shrimp in federal and state waters to assist in determining opening and closing dates for commercial fisheries.
- Surveying hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico to inform managers regarding the impacts to marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Estimating finfish bycatch in the shrimp fisheries of the Gulf and South Atlantic, supporting bycatch reduction device regulations.
- Evaluating community structure and trophic interactions in the various regions to assist in development of ecosystem models to support ecosystem-based management.
- Collecting bottom habitat and snapper/grouper species information, supporting designation of EFH and the establishment of deepwater marine protected areas in the South Atlantic.
- Contributing to the compilation of existing deepwater habitat distribution and geologic information, which supports SAFMC's creation and conservation of 23,000 square miles of Deepwater Coral HAPC in the South Atlantic - the largest and least impacted deepwater coral ecosystem in the world.

SEAMAP continued from page 9



Photo (c) Jeff Rester, GSMFC

in the region. The primary means of performing that task is to optimize coordination and deployment of regional surveys and provide access to the collected data through documents and online databases. Additional roles of SEAMAP are to document long- and short-term needs for fishery-independent data to meet critical management and research needs, and to establish compatible and consistent databases for ecosystem and predictive modeling applications. SEAMAP promotes coordination among data collection, processing, management, and analysis activities emphasizing those specifically concerned with living marine resource management and habitat protection, and provides a forum for coordination of other fishery-related activities.

The 2016-2020 SEAMAP Management Plan is available online at: <http://bit.ly/2pw1qXM>. For more information about SEAMAP, particularly the South Atlantic component, please visit www.SEAMAP.org or contact Shanna Madsen, SEAMAP-SA Coordinator, at smadsen@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.



Photo (c) Pearse Webster, Coastal Survey

SPRING MEETING FINAL AGENDA continued from page 7

- Review Allocation Workgroup Recommendations
- Provide Guidance/Additional Input to Plan Development Team Regarding Management Options
- New York Participation in Episodic Events Program (*J. Gilmore*) **Possible Action**

3:30 - 5:45 Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (continued)

- Provide Guidance to Technical Committee Regarding Stock Projections
 - Review Stock Projection Methodology (*J. McNamee*)
- Consider Approval of 2017 FMP Review and State Compliance Reports (*M. Ware*) **Action**

6:30 Annual Awards of Excellence Reception

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

8 - 9:30 AM Executive Committee (A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only)

- Public Comment
- Report of the Administrative Oversight Committee
- Presentation of FY18 Proposed Budget
- Discussion on Advisory Panel Members Serving as Board Proxies
- Consider the Necessity for Technical Committee Meeting Weeks (*R. Beal*)
- Future Annual Meetings Update (*L. Leach*)
- Executive Director's Annual Performance Review (*R. Beal*) **(Closed Session)**

9:45 - 10:45 AM Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Public Comment
- Final Rule for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Amendment 5b (Dusky Sharks)
 - Review Final Rule for HMS Amendment 5b (*K. Brewster-Geisz*)
 - Advisory Panel Report (*L. Gillingham*)
 - Consider Complementary Management Measures (*R. Miller*) **Possible Action**

11 AM - Noon Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Coordinating Council

- Public Comment
- ACCSP Status Report
 - Program Status (*M. Cahall*)
 - Committee Updates (*P. Campfield*)
- Review and Consider Approval of 2017 Request for Proposals (*M. Cahall*) **Action**

1 - 5:30 PM Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Management Board and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- Public Comment
- Scup Addendum XXIX for Final Approval (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Final Action***
 - Review Management Alternatives
 - Public Comment Summary
 - Technical Committee Report
 - Advisory Panel Report
 - Consider Final Approval of Addendum XXIX

* Council will also take action on Scup Framework 10

- Review Summer Flounder Draft Comprehensive Amendment Range of Alternatives for Commercial Issues (*K. Rootes-Murdy, K. Dancy*)
- Consider 2017 Black Sea Bass Recreational Measures (*K. Rootes-Murdy*) **Final Action**
 - Review Final 2016 Recreational Black Sea Bass Harvest Estimate
 - Consider Management Response to the Final Harvest Estimate

- Review White Paper on Potential Experimental Recreational Wave 1 Black Sea Bass Fishery (*B. Muffley*) **Possible Final Action***
- Consider Postponed Motion to Allow Experimental Wave 1 For-hire Fishery: *Motion to allow an experimental 2018 January/February (wave one), recreational federally permitted for-hire fishery for black sea bass with a 15 fish per person possession limit, a suspended minimum size limit, and a zero discard policy to allow for barotrauma, and a mandatory trip reporting requirement.*

** Joint Board and Council Action*

- Review State Compliance with Addendum XXVIII Summer Flounder Recreational Measures for 2017 **Possible Action**
- Review White Paper on Summer Flounder Recreational Specifications (*R. Ballou*)

THURSDAY, MAY 11

8 - 10:30 AM Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Public Comment
- Executive Committee Update (*D. Grout*)
- Review and Consider New Jersey Appeal of Addendum XXVIII to the Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan Final Action (*D. Grout*)
- Update on Climate Change Working Group (*T. Kerns*)
- Review and Discuss 2017 Commissioner Survey Results (*D. Tompkins*)
- Committee Report on Safe Harbor Landings (*J. Gilmore*) **Possible Action**
- Update on the Marine Recreational Information Program Transition of the Fishing Effort Survey and the Access Point Intercept Survey (*D. Van Voorhees*)
- Review and Consider Approval of Standard Meeting Practices (*T. Kerns*) **Action**
- Progress Update on the 2017 Sturgeon Benchmark Stock Assessment (*K. Drew*)
- Review and Consider Approval of the Assessment Schedule (*S. Madsen*) **Action**
- Standing Committee Reports
 - Law Enforcement Committee (*M. Robson*)
 - Habitat and Artificial Reefs (*L. Havel*)
- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (*L. Havel*)
- Review Non-compliance Findings (if necessary) **Final Action**

10:30 - 11 AM Business Session

- Public Comment
- Review Noncompliance Findings (if necessary) **Final Action**

11:15 AM - 3 PM South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Public Comment
- 2017 Atlantic Croaker Benchmark Stock Assessment **Final Action**
 - Presentation of Benchmark Stock Assessment Report (*C. McDonough*)
 - Peer Review Panel Report (*P. Campfield*)
 - Consider Acceptance of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for Management Use
 - Consider Management Response to Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report (*J. Estes*)
- 2017 Spot Benchmark Stock Assessment **Final Action**
 - Presentation of Benchmark Assessment Report (*C. McDonough*)
 - Peer Review Panel Report (*P. Campfield*)
 - Consider Acceptance of Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report for Management Use
 - Consider Management Response to Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report (*J. Estes*)
- Progress Report on Cobia Draft Fishery Management Plan (*L. Daniel*)
 - Provide Guidance to the Plan Development Team

Comings and Goings

COMMISSIONERS

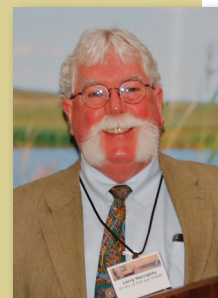
MARK ALEXANDER

In January, Mark Alexander became Connecticut's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. No stranger to the Commission, having served as an administrative proxy, longstanding member of the Management and Science Committee, and ACCSP Coordinating Council member and past chair, Mr. Alexander brings a wealth of information and expertise to the table on fisheries management, science and data collection. Since 2008, Mr. Alexander has also served as Connecticut's designee to the New England Fishery Management Council. Mr. Alexander received his B.S. in Marine Biology from Nicholls State University, Summa cum laude, and his M.S. in Marine Environmental Science from the Marine Sciences Research Center, State University of New York at Stony Brook.



LARRY HERRIGHTY

In April, Larry Herrighty became New Jersey's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Mr. Herrighty replaces David Chanda who had served in that position since 2007. Mr. Herrighty joined the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in 1980 as an assistant biologist with the Bureau of Wildlife Management's Upland Game Project. Since 2007, he has been Assistant Director for Fish & Wildlife Operations. He helped develop the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and worked



See COMINGS AND GOINGS, page 12

Recreational Fisheries Legislation Introduced in U.S. House of Representatives

Legislation introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives would revise NOAA Fisheries' management authority for recreational fisheries. H.R. 2023 'The Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017,' was introduced by Representatives Garret Graves (R-LA), Gene Green (D-TX), Dan Webster (R-FL) and Rob Wittman (R-VA) on April 6, 2017. The bill falls under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans, of which Wittman, Graves and Webster are all Members.



Title I of H.R. 2023 focuses on the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic mixed use fisheries, and would require an allocation review of fisheries within two years. For recreational portion of the fisheries, it would also permit the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils to utilize alternative management measures including 'extraction rates, fishing mortality targets, and harvest control rules...' New limited access privilege programs for any mixed-use fisheries for commercial and recreational sectors in the regions would be prohibited under the legislation. With respect to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act's ten year rebuilding requirement, H.R. 2023 would provide limited biological exceptions when annual catch

limits (ACLs) are developed. It would allow councils to consider ecosystem changes when establishing ACLs and establish new requirements for approval of experimental fishing permits.

Title II of the legislation is focused on improvement of recreational data. Specifically, it encourages greater incorporation of data from state and NGO sources, and would provide grants to states to improve state registry programs. Grants would be funded from money appropriated for the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Title II would

also require a National Academy of Sciences evaluation of MRIP's effectiveness with respect in-season managements of ACLs.

The bill is backed by numerous recreational fishing groups that argue the Magnuson-Stevens Act has never been updated to reflect the unique needs of recreational anglers; and drawn opposition from commercial groups who oppose the legislation for constraining federal managers' options to innovate new solutions to overfishing.

For more information, please contact Deke Tompkins, Legislative Executive Assistant at dtompkins@asmfc.org.

COMINGS AND GOINGS *continued from page 11*

with staff to implement liberalized archery hunting regulations to manage suburban deer populations.

Mr. Herrighty holds a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resource Management, specializing in Wildlife Resources, from Rutgers University (Cook College). Welcome aboard, Mr. Herrighty!



DAVID SIMPSON

The Commission's 75th Annual Meeting marked David Simpson's last meeting in his official capacity as Connecticut's Administrative Commissioner to the ASMFC; a position he held since 2008 with his promotion to Director of Connecticut's Marine Fisheries Division. A 32-year veteran of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Mr. Simpson's

earliest involvement with the Commission began in 1990 as a member of the Conservation Engineering Committee and shortly after as a member of the Management and Science Committee, which he served on from 1992-2008. We wish Mr. Simpson a long, healthy and joyful retirement, where he can fish to his heart's content.

STAFF

AMY HIRRLINGER

In late April, Amy Hirrlinger left ASMFC to pursue a Masters of Science in Environmental Science and Policy from Johns Hopkins. Amy joined the Commission back in September 2014 to get exposure to fisheries management and science issues and help figure out the next steps in her education and career. Over the next 2 ½ years, Amy provided valuable support and assistance in almost all aspects of the Commission's activities, ranging from administrative/outreach support with mailing, publication and article development, website content maintenance, and tradeshow preparation; ISFMP support through her assistance in drafting the Jonah Crab FMP, FMP Reviews, public comment summaries and proof reading of documents; support to science on artificial reefs and the SEAMAP 5-Year Plan; and APAIS support in prepping surveys for scanning. In everything she did, she brought her sunny disposition and enthusiasm. While we are sad to see her go, we are thrilled for the opportunities that lie ahead for her and wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.



South Atlantic Project on For-Hire Electronic Reporting

Over the past several years, fishermen and fisheries managers have expressed growing interest in collecting for-hire catch and effort data via logbooks, expecting that increased reporting will improve the data collected, particularly for catches of species that are not well represented in existing survey methods. Weekly charter boat reporting via electronic logbooks could also improve both data timeliness and accuracy, allowing managers to monitor recreational catch limits more closely and adjust management accordingly.

In fiscal year 2016, ACCSP provided funding to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and its state partners to conduct a pilot project testing the feasibility of a tablet-based electronic logbook program for the federally-permitted charter boat sector of the South Atlantic. The project consists of four components: an electronic logbook application, electronic integrated fish measuring boards, a dockside validation

application, and a law enforcement application.

To test electronic reporting, the project is using a modified version of ACCSP's SAFIS eTrips/Mobile application that Harbor Light Software has formatted specifically for use in the South Atlantic region. 23 vessels from North Carolina to Florida have been recruited to participate in the pilot, and the captains of these vessels have been provided with tablets and trained in the use of the application. Participating captains have been asked to submit weekly electronic logbooks using eTrips/Mobile according to the requirements of the SAFMC.

To-date, captains have entered 121 practice and actual trip reports into the app. Project partners have also obtained valuable feedback from the captains that is being used to refine the application and enhance its usability in the South Atlantic. This project is also developing and pilot-testing a tablet application for the

collection of dockside validation data by state staff in order to cross reference the self-reported logbook data. The initial construct, which is based on the MRIP survey, is near completion. Once the software is complete, project partners will train state samplers in its use, and state samplers will field test the application.

In the coming months, project partners will integrate electronic fish measuring boards with eTrips/Mobile and the dockside validation app to facilitate collection of lengths data. The electronic measuring boards will communicate length measurements directly to the tablet applications using Bluetooth technology, therefore following and extending the application of the ACCSP's data collection standards. Partners will also develop a separate phone-based, mobile law enforcement application will allow law enforcement officials to check reporting compliance while in the field.

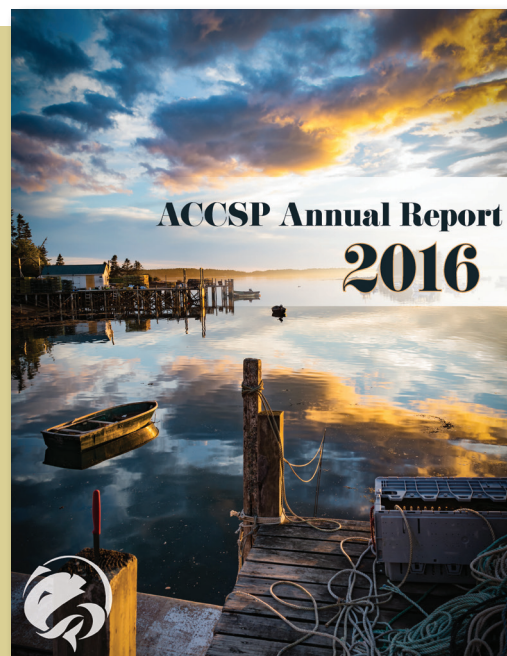
ACCSP Releases 2016 Annual Report

ACCSP has released its 2016 Annual Report, detailing the Program's activities and accomplishments over the past year. Since its creation in 1995, ACCSP has made significant advancements towards its vision of being the principal source of fisheries-dependent information on the Atlantic coast through the cooperation of all program partners in the collection and processing of common fisheries data, and the dissemination of the information for purposes of fisheries science and management.

You can find the Annual Report online at [http://www.accsp.org/sites/default/files/Annual Report 2016_FINAL.pdf](http://www.accsp.org/sites/default/files/Annual%20Report%202016_FINAL.pdf). Here's what you'll find inside:

ACCSP Overview
Program Activities and FY16 Projects
SAFIS Updates
Integrated Reporting

Updates on the State Conduct of APAIS
The New Data Warehouse
Current State of Electronic Reporting



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

Max Appelman Named Employee of the Quarter

In his two years with the Commission, Max Appelman, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator for Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, northern shrimp bluefish, and spiny dogfish, has proven himself to be an essential contributor to the Commission's fisheries management program. In recognition of his dedication and accomplishments, Max was named Employee of the Quarter for the Second Quarter of 2017.



On the management side, Max's ability to collaborate with committee members and his expertise in developing management options has elevated the quality of Commission reports. His efforts have resulted in the release of Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Northern Shrimp for public comment, as well as a well informed and responsive striped bass management program.

Max has played a key role in the preparation of two benchmark stock assessments: one for Atlantic sturgeon, whose last major benchmark assessment was conducted in 1998, and the other for northern shrimp. His work on the Atlantic sturgeon assessment is particularly noteworthy for his successful coordination of a large and diverse technical committee and stock assessment committee, including biologists and stock assessment scientists from state (both marine and inland) and federal agencies, and academia. His close and effective collaboration with Drs. Katie Drew and Kristen Anstead on stock assessments and technical tasks are great examples of teamwork and the cohesion between the fisheries science and management staff.

Max's drive, meticulousness, and strong work ethic are clearly reflected in his work. He proactively seeks ways to improve the Commission process and builds strong working relationships with committee members and Commission staff. And, if that were not enough, Max's passion for "Bring Back Tie Tuesday" to the office further exemplifies his commitment to professionalism in all that he does at the Commission. Max has a Master of Science in Marine Biology from Nova Southeastern University and a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife from Michigan State University. As Employee of the Quarter, he received a cash award and a letter of appreciation to be placed in his personal record. In addition, his name is on the Employee of the Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Max!



COMMEMORATING 75 YEARS OF COOPERATIVE
SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Forging Knowledge Into Change

Cooperation among 15 sovereign states and commonwealths is seldom simple. In fact, this endeavor is often elusive and difficult to define. The pursuit of interstate cooperation has been the primary objective of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for the past 75 years.

With great pride and excitement, at its 75th Annual Meeting last fall, the Commission released, "Forging Knowledge Into Change: Commemorating 75 Years of Cooperative Sustainable Fisheries Management." The publication, which documents three-quarters of a century of interstate cooperative management of the Atlantic seaboard's shared marine resources, is now available via e-book at http://www.asmf.org/files/pub/FKIC_Ebook/index.html.

Limited printed copies are available; to request a copy, contact info@asmfc.org.