



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Habitat Committee Virtual Meeting Summary November 12-13, 2020

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Staff Present: Lisa Havel (Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, and ASMFC Habitat Committee Coordinator) and Toni Kerns (Interstate Fisheries Management Program Director)

Guests Present: Trish Murphey (NCDEQ/APNEP), Joseph Zydlewski (University of Maine)

Habitat Committee (HC) Members Present: Russ Babb (NJDFW-Marine Fisheries Administration), Michelle Bachman (NEFMC), Josh Carloni (NHFG), Lou Chiarella (NOAA GARFO), Jessica Coakley (MAFMC), Phil Colarusso (USEPA), Jimmy Johnson (NCDEQ, Committee Vice Chair), Sharleen Johnson (SCDNR), Robert LaFrance (CT Audubon Society), Wilson Laney (NC Coastal Federation), Mark Rousseau (MADMF), Eric Schneider (RIDFW-Marine Fisheries), Kent Smith (FL FWC), Julia Socrates (NYSDEC), Marek Topolski (MDDNR, Committee Chair), Tony Watkinson (VMRC), and Kate Wilke (TNC Mid-Atlantic), Paul Medders (GA DNR)

The Habitat Committee met virtually in the fall due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lisa provided an update on ACFHP activities. The National Fish Habitat Conservation through Partnerships Act was signed into law in October, which will bring a lot of administrative changes to the partnerships. They are hoping that 2021 will be a transition year before those changes need to be implemented in 2022. Both the Northeast and Southeast Habitat Mapping projects are complete, and Lisa has released the final report, user guide, and how-to video. ACFHP, Pew, and partners have been moving the conservation along regarding SAV monitoring protocols for the Atlantic coast, having held multiple webinars with stakeholders. Lisa also reviewed the status of their current on-the-ground projects, funded through the USFWS, NOAA, and FishAmerica Foundation.

Joe Zydlewski presented on the habitat aspects of the American shad assessment. They incorporated geographically appropriate life history parameters and used application of realistic passage rates in their model. They compared three scenarios: pre-industrial, first dam blocks all of the fish passage, and a consideration that each dam was somewhat permeable. There has been an approximate 40% loss of habitat for shad compared to pre-impoundment levels. There is a similar percentage loss in number of spawners. This loss is minimally relieved by anthropogenic fish passage structures. He noted if you don't have downstream passage, it doesn't matter how good your upstream passage is.

Lou gave an update on the living shorelines impacts to SAV beds policy. In August, the Policy Board granted the Habitat Committee approval to develop a policy, but there hasn't been much movement since then. A subcommittee to continue working on this was confirmed at the meeting, and a plan to move it forward was put in place.

Vision: Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

Wilson and Jimmy led a discussion on an EA written by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District regarding the removal of dredging windows for the ports of Wilmington and Morehead City. Currently the window is December 1 – April 15th in order to reduce impacts to fishes traveling from the ocean to critical nursery habitats. Although the comment period is over, the Habitat Committee decided it was still worthwhile to write a letter, to be approved by the Policy Board, to express their concern for both the species it would impact and the precedent it would set for the rest of the coast. Wilson and Jimmy will work together to draft the letter.

The HC also discussed the status of the Acoustic Impacts to Fish Habitats *Habitat Management Series* document, as well as the 2020 *Habitat Hotline*. The *Habitat Hotline* will focus on fish habitat assessments along the Atlantic coast. Finally, the Habitat Committee spent time going through the current state of the Fish Habitats of Concern designations.