

# ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

## 2017 Action Plan



Approved October 26, 2016

## **Goal 1 - Rebuild, maintain and fairly allocate Atlantic coastal fisheries**

Goal 1 focuses on the responsibility of the states to conserve and manage Atlantic coastal fishery resources for sustainable use. Commission members will advocate decisions to achieve the long-term benefits of conservation, while balancing the socio-economic interests of coastal communities. Inherent in this is the recognition that healthy and vibrant resources mean more jobs and more opportunity for those that live along the coast. The states are committed to proactive management, with a focus on integrating ecosystem services, socio-economic impacts, habitat issues, bycatch and discard reduction measures, and protected species interactions into well-defined fishery management plans. Fishery management plans will also address fair (equitable) allocation of fishery resources among the states. Understanding global climate change and its impact on fishery productivity and distribution is an elevated priority. Improving cooperation and coordination with federal partners and stakeholders can streamline efficiency, transparency, and, ultimately, success. In the next five years, the Commission is committed to making significant progress on rebuilding overfished or depleted Atlantic fish stocks.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

- 1.1 Manage interstate resources that provide for productive, sustainable fisheries using sound science.

#### **American Eel**

Task 1.1.1 – Monitor Addendum IV commercial landings. Assist states in implementing and monitoring yellow eel quotas in 2017 if triggered.

Task 1.1.2 – Complete the 2017 stock assessment update and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.3 – Continue to work with Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) on monitoring poaching and illegal sale of glass eels (see Task 3.3.1).

Task 1.1.4 – Continue to collaborate on management and scientific activities with Great Lakes Fishery Commission, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NOAA Fisheries, and Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Explore collaboration with DFO on the next Benchmark Stock Assessment.

Task 1.1.5 – Monitor and respond if necessary to the classification of eel under the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

Task 1.1.6 – Work with the Technical Committee to finalize and implement a life cycle survey in the State of Maine to estimate incremental survival across life stages. Review

any additional life cycle survey proposals if submitted. Update the young of the year survey data.

Task 1.1.7 – Work with the Technical Committee and the Fish Passage Work Group to annually update the board on fish passage improvements and current issues including hydropower dam issues. States can use this information when leveraging partnerships to reduce passage impacts on eel and other anadromous species. (See Task 4.3.4)

Task 1.1.8 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **American Lobster and Jonah Crab**

#### ***American Lobster***

Task 1.1.9 – Finalize and implement Addendum XXV for the Southern New England (SNE) fishery to respond to the results of the 2015 benchmark stock assessment in Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Task 1.1.10 – Develop and implement an addendum to improve catch and biological reporting in the lobster fishery.

Task 1.1.11 – Monitor trap reductions in SNE lobster fishery and implementation of addenda (XXII, XXIII, and XXV) to determine need and extent of further management action in the region.

Task 1.1.12 – Review analysis by Technical Committee on Gulf of Maine stock and determine need and extent of management action in the region.

Task 1.1.13 – Monitor Regional Fishery Management Councils actions on habitat area closures and implementation of the Atlantic national monument for impacts to the lobster fishery, respond if necessary.

Task 1.1.14 – Address lobster trap design, focusing on improvement to escapement of lobster from derelict traps. (See Task 2.4.5)

Task 1.1.15 – Monitor the use of the lobster trap database to track trap tag transfers.

Task 1.1.16 – Update the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Data Warehouse with landings information and monitor landings patterns in both the trap and non-trap fisheries.

Task 1.1.17 – Monitor trap tag production and distribution.

Task 1.1.18 – Continue to work with Offshore Lobster Law Enforcement Subcommittee to improve enforcement of offshore management measures, especially trap reductions.

Task 1.1.19 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance. Continue to work with the federal government to ensure consistency between regulations in state and federal waters, including trap banking measures in LCMAs 2 and 3 as outlined in Addenda XXI and XXII.

#### ***Jonah Crab***

Task 1.1.20 – Monitor Regional Fishery Management Councils actions on habitat area closures and implementation of the Atlantic national monument for impacts to the crab fishery, respond if necessary.

Task 1.1.21 – Finalize and implement Addendum II to the Jonah Crab FMP to ensure consistent regulations in the claw fishery in both state and federal waters.

Task 1.1.22 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance. Continue to work with the federal government to ensure consistency between regulations in state and federal waters.

#### **Atlantic Herring**

Task 1.1.23 – Review existing specifications for 2017-2018. Set Area 1A specifications for 2017.

Task 1.1.24 – Monitor activities of the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) regarding complementary FMP actions, including but not limited to ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM), Amendment 8 issues and, river herring bycatch avoidance program. Consider complementary action where necessary (See Task 1.2.5).

Task 1.1.25 – Hold meetings as necessary to establish state effort control (days-out) programs for Areas 1A and 1B.

Task 1.1.26 – Review performance of the GSI<sub>30</sub>-Based Spawning Monitoring Pilot Program and consider use in future years.

Task 1.1.27 – Consider management action to meet the goals and objectives of the Area 1A fishery.

Task 1.1.28 – Participate on the NEFMC EBFM Plan Development Team to draft a Fishery Ecosystem Plan.

Task 1.1.29 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Atlantic Menhaden**

Task 1.1.30 – Continue work with the Technical Committee and Ecological Reference Points Working Group to develop ecosystem reference points based on Board-defined goals and objectives. (See Task 2.4.1). Hold a workshop to discuss and review potential ERPs to include in Draft Amendment 3, if identified by the Board as a priority and resources allow.

Task 1.1.31 – Finalize and implement Amendment 3 to revisit quota allocation and address ERPs.

Task 1.1.32 – Complete the 2017 stock assessment update and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.33 – Monitor the 2017 episodic events set aside quota and set the 2018 fishery specifications.

Task 1.1.34 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Atlantic Striped Bass**

Task 1.1.35 – Consider management response to 2016 stock assessment update, if necessary.

Task 1.1.36 – Initiate the development of the 2018 benchmark stock assessment to include fleet- and sex-specific analyses, as well as regional models.

Task 1.1.37 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Atlantic Sturgeon**

Task 1.1.38 – Finalize the 2017 benchmark stock assessment and consider management response, if necessary.

Task 1.1.39 – Transmit benchmark assessment findings to NOAA Fisheries for consideration in the 2017 5-year ESA status review.

Task 1.1.40 – Monitor state and federal activities in response to ESA listing of Atlantic sturgeon.

Task 1.1.41 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Bluefish**

Task 1.1.42 – Work in collaboration with Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to complete a stock assessment update. Consider management response to the update findings in conjunction with MAFMC, if necessary.

Task 1.1.43 – Review specifications for 2018 in cooperation with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.44 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Coastal Sharks**

Task 1.1.45 – Establish specifications for 2018 and later.

Task 1.1.46 – Monitor and engage in the development of Amendment 5b (dusky shark management).

Task 1.1.47 – Review and consider dusky shark benchmark stock assessment for management and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.48 – Monitor activities of NOAA Fisheries and its Highly Migratory Species Division with regards to coastal shark management actions for consistency.

Task 1.1.49 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Horseshoe Crab**

Task 1.1.50 – Establish the 2018 specifications using the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework and quota allocation methodology.

Task 1.1.51 – Engage federal stakeholders, the biomedical community, and shorebird interest groups to secure long-term funding to support data collection for use in the ARM Framework, including the Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl Survey. (Task 6.2.3)

Task 1.1.52 – Engage the biomedical community toward finding a solution regarding confidential data use in order to enhance stock assessments and scientific advice for management.

Task 1.1.53 – Continue to develop the 2018 benchmark stock assessment.

Task 1.1.54 – Monitor red knot listing under the ESA.

Task 1.1.55 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance for both the bait and biomedical industries.

### **Northern Shrimp**

Task 1.1.56 – Complete the 2017 benchmark stock assessment and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.57 – Finalize and implement Amendment 3, which proposes measures to stabilize effort in the fishery and minimize catch of small shrimp.

Task 1.1.58 – Establish specifications for the 2017/2018 season. Consider industry test tows to collect biological data, if necessary and as resources allow.

Task 1.1.59 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Shad and River Herring**

Task 1.1.60 – Complete the 2017 river herring stock assessment update.

Task 1.1.61 – Initiate development of the 2018 shad stock assessment update.

Task 1.1.62 – Monitor activities of the NEFMC and the MAFMC management actions including but not limited to shad and river herring catch caps and bycatch avoidance programs (see Task 1.2.5).

Task 1.1.63 – Review products of the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group and consider for management use.

Task 1.1.64 – Review and update sustainable fisheries plans and/or habitat plans as required by Amendment 3, if necessary.

Task 1.1.65 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **South Atlantic Species**

#### ***Atlantic Croaker***

Task 1.1.66 – Complete the 2017 benchmark stock assessment and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.67 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

#### ***Black Drum***

Task 1.1.68 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Cobia***

Task 1.1.69 – Develop and implement a Cobia FMP and work with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and NOAA Fisheries to ensure complementary regulations between state and federal waters.

***Red Drum***

Task 1.1.70 – Consider management response to the 2016 assessment findings and the Technical Committee and Stock Assessment Working Group responses to the Board tasks following the assessment.

Task 1.1.71 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spanish Mackerel***

Task 1.1.72 – Review annual report from North Carolina concerning Addendum I to the FMP. Consider changes to the management program, if necessary.

Task 1.1.73 – Monitor activities of the SAFMC to ensure consistency between state and federal management programs.

Task 1.1.74 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spot***

Task 1.1.75 – Complete the 2017 benchmark stock assessment and consider management response to the assessment findings.

Task 1.1.76 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spotted Seatrout***

Task 1.1.77 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spiny Dogfish***

Task 1.1.78 – Review recent assessment information and establish specifications beginning in 2018/2019.

Task 1.1.79 – Participate in annual stock status update, as needed.

Task 1.1.80 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.



### **Summer Flounder**

Task 1.1.81 – Continue development of the comprehensive summer flounder amendment, considering changes to both commercial and recreational management in coordination with MAFMC. Consider technical committee recommendations on climate change impacts on species distribution and allocation.

Task 1.1.82 – Develop and implement an addendum to consider a management approach for the recreational fishery in 2017 and beyond.

Task 1.1.83 – Finalize regulations for 2017 recreational fishery.

Task 1.1.84 – Review 2017-2018 specifications in collaboration with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.85 – Work in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC to complete a stock status update. Support the development of a sex specific stock assessment modeling approach; monitor the progress of model development and engage as appropriate.

Task 1.1.86 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### ***Scup***

Task 1.1.87 – Collaborate with MAFMC to on the next amendment if initiated by the Council in 2017.

Task 1.1.88 – Collaborate with NEFSC to complete a data update.

Task 1.1.89 – Finalize regulations for 2017 recreational fishery.

Task 1.1.90 – Review 2018 specifications in collaboration with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.91 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### ***Black Sea Bass***

Task 1.1.92 – Collaborate with MAFMC to consider management response to the 2016 benchmark assessment findings; modify 2017 specifications as needed and set 2108 specifications.

Task 1.1.93 – Finalize regulations for 2017 recreational fishery.

Task 1.1.94 – Develop and implement an addendum to consider recreational fishing measures for 2018 and beyond.

Task 1.1.95 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Tautog**

Task 1.1.96 – In response to the 2015 benchmark stock assessment, 2016 regional assessment and 2016 assessment update, finalize and implement management measures for Amendment 1, which proposes regional stock areas for management use, increased monitoring, and a commercial harvest tagging program.

Task 1.1.97 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Weakfish**

Task 1.1.98 – Continue Technical Committee work to evaluate sources of mortality.

Task 1.1.99 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Winter Flounder**

Task 1.1.100 – Monitor NEFSC stock assessment activities for inshore winter flounder stocks and review/modify specifications for 2018.

Task 1.1.101 – Continue to monitor federal common pool landings and regulations.

Task 1.1.102 – Work through the Northeast Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) to improve communication between ASMFC, NEFMC, GARFO and the NEFSC to identify stock rebuilding opportunities.

Task 1.1.103 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

1.2 Strengthen state and federal partnerships to improve comprehensive management of shared fishery resources.

Task 1.2.1 – Participate on the East Coast Regional Fishery Management Councils and committees regarding matters of mutual interest.

Task 1.2.2 – Participate on the NRCC and SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review Steering Committee to set state/federal management and assessment priorities.

Task 1.2.3 – Work with the Regional Fishery Management Councils and NOAA Fisheries to improve alignment between state and federal fishery management programs.

Task 1.2.4 – Work with the Regional Fishery Management Councils and NOAA to review the guidance on Changes to National Standard 1.

Task 1.2.5– Work with NOAA Headquarters and regional leadership to improve alignment of state/federal budget priorities.

Task 1.2.6 – Continue to work with NEFMC and MAFMC on evaluating and mitigating shad and river herring bycatch. (See Task 1.1.55)

Task 1.2.7 – Continue to work with NEFMC and MAFMC on habitat amendments and impacts to the American lobster and Jonah crab fisheries.

1.3 Adapt management to address emerging issues.

Task 1.3.1 – Continue to monitor developments related to climate change, ocean acidification, stock distributions, ecosystem services, ocean planning and potential fisheries reallocations.

Subtask 1.3.1.1 – Convene the Climate Change Working Group to develop white paper addressing fisheries impacted by climate change.

Task 1.3.2 – Consider approval of Risk and Uncertainty Work Group draft policy for management implementation.

1.4 Practice efficient, transparent, and accountable management processes.

Task 1.4.1 – Continue to track status of stocks relative to biological reference points to evaluate and drive improvement and results in the Commission’s fisheries management process.

Task 1.4.2 – Continue the use of decision documents and working groups to structure Board discussion on complex management decisions and increase transparency of pending board action.

Task 1.4.3 – Continue to focus Board attention on developing clear problem statements prior to initiating management changes.

Task 1.4.4 – Continue to use roll call voting procedures for Commission final actions.

1.5 Evaluate progress towards rebuilding fisheries.

Task 1.5.1 – Conduct annual Commissioner assessment of progress towards achieving the Commission’s mission, vision, and goals using an on-line survey. Report findings to the ISFMP Policy Board.

Task 1.5.2 – Continue the use of the annual performance of the stock to evaluate species rebuilding progress. Report findings to the ISFMP Policy Board.

Subtask 1.5.2.1 – Establish a Policy Board Working Group to consider options to more effectively review progress in achieving the Commission’s vision.

1.6 Strengthen interactions and input among stakeholders, technical, advisory, and management groups.

Task 1.6.1 – Engage American lobster, Jonah crab, summer flounder, black sea bass, horseshoe crab, South Atlantic species, tautog, menhaden and northern shrimp advisory panels (APs) in the development of FMPs and Amendments. Solicit state membership of current active APs and appoint new membership where necessary.

Task 1.6.2 – Review advisory panel guiding documents including chair term limits.

Task 1.6.3 – Continue communication with non-active advisory panels (species in the maintenance mode).

Task 1.6.4 – Integrate non-traditional constituents into Advisory Panels (See Task 5.2.3).

## **Goal 2 – Provide the scientific foundation for and conduct stock assessments to support informed management actions**

Sustainable management of fisheries relies on accurate and timely scientific advice. The Commission strives to produce sound, actionable science through a technically rigorous, independently peer-reviewed stock assessment process. Assessments are developed using a broad suite of fishery-independent surveys and fishery-dependent monitoring, as well as research products developed by a vast network of fisheries scientists at state, federal, and academic institutions along the coast. The goal encompasses the development of new, innovative scientific research and methodology, and the enhancement of the states’ stock assessment capabilities. It provides for the administration, coordination, and expansion of collaborative research and data collection programs. Achieving the goal will ensure sound science is available to serve as the foundation for the Commission’s evaluation of stock status and adaptive management actions.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

2.1 Conduct stock assessments based on comprehensive data sources and rigorous technical analysis.

Task 2.1.1 – Address data deficiencies and priorities for stocks with limited data or stocks of unknown status. Collect more comprehensive information for data poor stocks in order to transition from problematic to more certain assessment models. Focal areas

include sciaenid bycatch data, black sea bass fishery-independent data, menhaden fishery-independent data, river herring at-sea and in-river monitoring, the horseshoe crab trawl survey, improved tautog indices, black drum biological sampling and fishery-independent monitoring of mature fish, American eel surveys covering all life stages, and red drum recreational discard size composition. Conduct Jonah crab tagging study to evaluate migration, stock connectivity and growth. *(Supported by NOAA Cooperative Agreement)*.

Task 2.1.2 – Complete benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic croaker, Atlantic sturgeon, northern shrimp and spot. Complete assessment updates for river herring, Atlantic menhaden, American eel, bluefish scup, black sea bass, and summer flounder.

Task 2.1.3 – Conduct independent peer reviews of the Atlantic sturgeon, northern shrimp, and spot and croaker stock assessments.

Task 2.1.4 – Conduct additional workshops with South Atlantic states to complete a southern flounder regional stock assessment (if funding is available).

Task 2.1.5 – Through the Assessment Science Committee (ASC) and Management and Science Committee (MSC), develop the long-term stock assessment schedule to prioritize stocks by management need; present tradeoffs to the Policy Board when assessment scheduling changes are requested.

Task 2.1.6 – Track assessment scientists' workloads in order to complete 2017-2018 stock assessments; using the guidance of the ASC, develop new policies and approaches to better match assessment demand with assessment scientists' capacity.

Task 2.1.7 – Through the ASC, conduct a Data Best Practices Workshop and expand Fishery-Independent Survey Database to promote efficient assessment report compilation.

Task 2.1.8 – Serve as members of the Atlantic Sturgeon, Atlantic Menhaden, American Eel, Northern Shrimp, Tautog, Bluefish, Horseshoe Crab, River Herring and Shad Technical Committees and Stock Assessment Subcommittees to assist in completion of benchmark assessments and annual assessment updates. Utilize the ASC for guidance with assessment methods as necessary.

Task 2.1.9 – Continue to work with state and federal stock assessment scientists and staff of the ACCSP to increase use of ACCSP data in the Commission's technical work.

Task 2.1.10 – Through the Risk and Uncertainty Policy Workgroup, finalize a Commission policy regarding risk and uncertainty, and provide to the ISFMP Policy Board for consideration and approval (See Task 1.3.2).

Task 2.1.11 – Conduct a Commissioner workshop on management risk and uncertainty.

2.2 Proactively address research priorities through cooperative state and regional data collection programs and collaborative research projects

Task 2.2.1 – Update the master list of ASMFC Research Priorities by species as benchmark assessments are completed and new priorities emerge; distribute Research Priorities to the states, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, and university researchers.

Task 2.2.2 – Organize a Sea Grant Workshop with research directors from the Atlantic states’ Sea Grant programs to identify common research priorities and pursue funding opportunities (if funding is available).

Task 2.2.3 – Participate in proposal reviews for NMFS Cooperative Research Programs, Saltonstall-Kennedy, Research Set-Aside, NFWF, ACCSP, MARFIN, and MARMAP, when requested, to evaluate projects and monitor new research activities to promote the states’ needs.

Subtask 2.2.3.1 – Develop and communicate research priorities for review and approval by species management boards.

Subtask 2.2.3.2 – Work with federal partners to ensure completed funded projects are reviewed and transmitted to technical committees and boards.

Subtask 2.2.3.3 – Monitor and participate in the MAFMC redesign of the Research Set-Aside Program (RSA) to ensure state interests are incorporated.

Task 2.2.4 – Communicate with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) on shared research priorities and funding opportunities (e.g., fish passage, catch shares). Participate in NFWF proposal reviews for the Fisheries Innovation Fund.

Task 2.2.5 – Participate on the ACCSP’s Coordinating Council, Operations Committee, Bycatch Prioritization Committee, Biological Review Panel, Recreational and Commercial Technical Committees, Outreach Committee and the Computer Technical Committee.

Subtask 2.2.5.1 – Submit ASMFC changes to the ACCSP Biosampling Prioritization Matrix. Consult Fishing Gear Technology Work Group regarding ASMFC input to Bycatch Prioritization Matrix.

Task 2.2.6 – Coordinate and implement the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP).

Subtask 2.2.6.1 – Administer funding to conduct 2017 NEAMAP Nearshore Trawl Surveys (Mid-Atlantic, Maine/New Hampshire).

Subtask 2.2.6.2 – Develop and implement strategy to detail future funding needs in order to address annual funding shortfalls for the Mid-Atlantic/Southern New England and Maine/New Hampshire Trawl Surveys.

Subtask 2.2.6.2 – Support continuation of the NEAMAP Nearshore Trawl Surveys through coordination with survey leads and all NEAMAP committees: NEAMAP Board, Operations, Data Management, Analytical, and Trawl Technical Committees

Subtask 2.2.6.3 – Conduct NEAMAP Summit to improve coordination among the committees, assess need for changes in program structure and committee functions.

Subtask 2.2.6.4 – Develop the 2017 NEAMAP Operations Plan.

Subtask 2.2.6.5 – Provide NEAMAP data to coastwide stock assessments; track and demonstrate data use, and report to the ISFMP Policy Board, NEFSC, and Congress; maintain the NEAMAP website as a tool for distributing program information and requesting data.

Task 2.2.7 – Coordinate the South Atlantic component of the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP).

Subtask 2.2.7.1 – Coordinate all research components of SEAMAP-South Atlantic: Coastal Trawl Survey, Coastal Longline Surveys, Pamlico Sound Survey, Reef Fish Survey, Southeast Regional Taxonomic Center, and the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise. Coordinate all current workgroups including the Bottom Mapping, Fish Habitat Characterization and Assessment, Data Management, Crustacean, Coastal Trawl Survey, and the Coastal Longline Survey Workgroups.

Subtask 2.2.7.2 – Implement the new 5-year SEAMAP Management Plan (2016-2020); track and demonstrate data use for coastwide stock assessments, and report to the South Atlantic Board and Congress; maintain the SEAMAP website hosted by ASMFC.

Subtask 2.2.7.3 – Participate in the expansion of SEAMAP-South Atlantic fishery-independent data coordination and mapping, as resources allow.

Subtask 2.2.7.4 – Coordinate South Atlantic activities with the Gulf and Caribbean components of SEAMAP.

Task 2.2.8 – Continue the Tagging Certification Program and support the use of tagging data in ASMFC stock assessments. Develop tagging registration programs, update and maintain the tagging resource website, link acoustic tagging information to the Atlantic Coastal Tagging (ACT) network website to improve the efficiency and quality of tagging efforts along the coast; secure telemetry tagging data for use in assessments.

Task 2.2.9 – Develop long-term strategy for collecting striped bass tagging data, including funding, administration, and at-sea support. Continue multi-estuary striped

bass telemetry study to determine migration rates and relative contributions to the coast wide stock. *(Supported by NOAA Cooperative Agreement)*.

Task 2.2.10 – Continue to participate in the development and implementation of the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), with ASMFC staff serving on Executive Steering Committee, Operations Team, Transition Team, and Angler Registry Team. Report progress to the ISFMP Policy Board, and scientific oversight committees (MSC, ASC).

Subtask 2.2.10.1 – Participate in development of MRIP Strategic Plan.

Subtask 2.2.10.2 – Participate in MRIP new effort survey review and time series calibration for use in upcoming stock assessments and potential changes to management.

Subtask 2.2.10.3 – Continue to highlight concerns regarding delays in releases of Wave data and final annual estimates.

Task 2.2.11 – Coordinate fish ageing activities among Atlantic coast states and university laboratories in order to provide consistent, accurate age data to stock assessments.

Subtask 2.2.11.1 – Complete the age sample exchange and conduct an ageing workshop for American eel to prepare laboratories for providing new age data consistent with historical age data.

Subtask 2.2.11.2 – Conduct an annual Ageing Quality Control Workshop using age sample reference collections for multiple species to maintain consistency among state and university ageing technicians.

Subtask 2.2.11.3 – Continue cooperative angler carcass donation programs with the states to collect age samples toward improving age data for assessments.

Subtask 2.2.11.4 – Continue coast wide black drum age sampling to address the deficiency in age data from older fish, for use in future stock assessments. *(Supported by NOAA Cooperative Agreement)*

Subtask 2.2.11.5 – Distribute to all ageing labs the finalized Atlantic and Gulf coasts fish ageing manual with fish ageing protocols; participate in joint coasts ageing manual workshops with GSMFC

Task 2.2.12 – Continue coordination of the ASMFC Observer Trips add-ons for Mid-Atlantic small-mesh otter trawl fisheries through the Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP). Evaluate Observer add-on impacts in collaboration with target species' assessment scientists and NEFOP.



Task 2.2.13 – Coordinate the activities of the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences (CESS).

Subtask 2.2.13.1 – Develop and provide basic socioeconomic information for inclusion in fishery management plans, amendments, and addenda.

Subtask 2.2.13.2 – Provide technical recommendations to the social and economic data collection and data management programs of the ASMFC and ACCSP.

Subtask 2.2.13.3 – Serve as a steering committee for ASMFC socioeconomic studies.

Subtask 2.2.13.4 – Provide guidance and translation of data from the Atlantic menhaden socioeconomic study to Atlantic Menhaden PDT during the development of Amendment 3.

2.3 Facilitate stakeholder involvement in research initiatives and the stock assessment process.

Task 2.3.1 – Seek stakeholder input at data workshops during development of stock assessments. Continue to issue press releases calling for new data when new assessments begin.

Task 2.3.2 – Promote scientifically sound tagging practices and certification of angler-based tagging programs through the Interstate Tagging Committee.

Task 2.3.3 – Develop outreach materials that highlight opportunities for public engagement in the Commission’s fisheries management and stock assessment processes. (See Task 5.2.4)

Task 2.3.4 – Track progress of citizen science initiatives through the SAFMC and other entities.

2.4 Promote data collection and research to support ecosystem-based management

Task 2.4.1 – Ecological Reference Points Workgroup: continue to develop ecosystem-based reference points that align with Board-approved management objectives for Atlantic menhaden. (See Task 1.1.27)

Task 2.4.2 – Continue to improve multispecies modeling efforts to support single-species assessments, including development of a new multispecies statistical catch-at-age model.

Task 2.4.3 – Identify opportunities to collaborate with state, federal, and university researchers to use existing data collection platforms to advance ASMFC ecosystem models (e.g. diet studies, surveys of spawning and nursery habitats).

Task 2.4.4 – Through the MSC, track the development of state and federal activities related to climate change and impacts to fisheries; provide updates to the Policy Board and Commissioner Work Group (See Task 1.3.1.1)

Task 2.4.5 – Convene the Fishing Gear Technology Work Group (FGTWG) to evaluate the efficacy of bycatch reduction devices in southern shrimp trawl fisheries to reduce Sciaenid bycatch; conduct FGTWG evaluation of the efficacy of lobster trap design to ensure escapement from derelict gear. (See Task 1.1.11)

Task 2.4.6 – Participate as members of the Chesapeake Bay Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team and Forage Fish Workgroup.

2.5 Provide stock assessment training to improve the expertise and involvement of state and staff scientists.

Task 2.5.1 – Conduct intermediate and advanced stock assessment methods training workshops.

Task 2.5.3 – Support external stock assessment training opportunities for staff and state scientists.

### **Goal 3 – Promote compliance with fishery management plans to ensure sustainable use of Atlantic coast fisheries**

Fisheries managers, law enforcement personnel, and stakeholders have a shared responsibility to promote compliance with fisheries management measures. Activities under the goal seek to increase and improve compliance with fishery management plans. This requires the successful coordination of both management and enforcement activities among state and federal agencies. Commission members recognize that adequate and consistent enforcement of fisheries rules is required to keep pace with increasingly complex management activity and emerging technologies. Achieving the goal will improve the effectiveness of the Commission’s fishery management plans.

#### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

3.1 Develop practical compliance requirements that foster stakeholder buy-in.

Task 3.1.1 – Identify and explore fishery management measures that maximize stakeholder buy-in.

Task 3.1.2 – Evaluate and report on compliance issues associated with newly implemented regulatory measures for American lobster, tautog, Jonah crab or other ASMFC-managed species as requested.

Task 3.1.3 – Assist MAFMC in identifying strategies to address violations and illegal harvest involved in RSA programs (if requested).

Task 3.1.4 – Continue working with the Tautog Enforcement Subcommittee to review and evaluate the effectiveness of commercial tagging systems and user acceptance (if adopted).

3.2 Evaluate the enforceability of management measures and the effectiveness of law enforcement programs.

Task 3.2.1 – Work with LEC Coordinator to ensure the input of the LEC throughout the management process on the enforceability of management options proposed in FMPs, amendments, addenda and conservation equivalency proposals.

Task 3.2.2 – Incorporate and reference the revised “Guidelines for Resource Managers” in reviews and evaluations of proposed changes to management programs.

Task 3.2.3 – Report on the enforceability of existing FMPs as part of the annual compliance review for each species.

Task 3.2.4 – Engage and support NMFS and USFWS Offices of Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Coast Guard to facilitate the enforceability of Commission FMPs.

Task 3.2.5 – Exchange information and best practices related to the enforcement of protected and endangered species regulations.

Task 3.2.6 – Annually review and comment on (as needed) NMFS enforcement priorities to ensure they support the enforceability and effectiveness of Commission management programs.

3.3 Promote coordination and expand existing partnerships with state and federal natural resource law enforcement agencies.

Task 3.3.1 – Provide a forum to promote and facilitate interjurisdictional enforcement operations targeting specific fishery resources (e.g. Atlantic striped bass, tautog, American eel). (See Task 1.1.2)

Task 3.3.2 – Maintain communications with the law enforcement advisory committees of the regional fishery management councils, interstate commissions, and other conservation organizations to seek opportunities for collaboration and ensure consistent law enforcement strategies.

Task 3.3.3 – Exchange information regarding planned and ongoing enforcement actions and facilitate communications regarding joint efforts that can assist in long-term fisheries enforcement.

Task 3.3.4 – Share enforcement techniques and law enforcement success stories and provide regional training sessions (if resources allow) to enhance law enforcement efficiency along the Atlantic coast.

Task 3.3.5 – Share information and resources for locating and obtaining enforcement related grants.

Task 3.3.6 – Advance the recommendations of the American Lobster Enforcement Subcommittee to enhance cooperative funding and enforcement activities for commercial fisheries in nearshore and offshore waters.

Task 3.3.7 – Review and evaluate inter-agency measures to enhance tracking of fishery shipment and sale across jurisdictional boundaries.

Task 3.3.8 – Advance any recommendations of the Aerial Enforcement Subcommittee that would support or enhance existing state-federal enforcement for ASMFC-managed species.

3.4 Enhance stakeholder awareness of management measures through education and outreach.

Task 3.4.1 – Continue to highlight the outcomes of law enforcement investigations (penalties and fines) through various outreach tools (website, social media, press releases, fact sheets).

3.5 Use emerging communication platforms to deliver real time information regarding regulations and the outcomes of law enforcement investigations.

Task 3.5.1 – Report on enforcement issues associated with differing federal, interstate, and state regulations using social media and timely press releases.

Task 3.5.2 – Provide forum for enforcement agencies to display successful development and use of enforcement technologies.

#### **Goal 4 – Protect and enhance fish habitat and ecosystem health through partnerships and education**

Goal 4 aims to conserve and improve coastal, marine, and riverine habitat to enhance the benefits of sustainable Atlantic coastal fisheries and resilient coastal communities in the face of changing ecosystems. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term sustainability and productivity of our nation’s fisheries. The

Commission's Habitat Program develops objectives, sets priorities, and produces tools to guide fisheries habitat conservation efforts directed towards ecosystem-based management.

The challenge for the Commission and its state members is maintaining fish habitat in the absence of specific regulatory authority for habitat protection or enhancement. Therefore, the Commission will work cooperatively with state, federal, and stakeholder partnerships to achieve this goal. The Commission and its Habitat Program endorses the National Fish Habitat Partnership, and will continue to work cooperatively with the program to improve aquatic habitat along the Atlantic coast. Since 2008, the Commission has invested considerable resources, as both a partner and administrative home, to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), a coastwide collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation and restoration of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

#### 4.1 Identify critical habitat through fisheries management programs and partnerships.

Task 4.1.1 – Review existing reference documents for Commission managed species to identify gaps or updates needed to describe important habitat types.

Task 4.1.2 – Review and revise species habitat factsheets as new data become available.

Task 4.1.3 – Coordinate artificial reef activities among the Atlantic coast states, and between the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions.

Task 4.1.4 – Co-sponsor Artificial Reefs Symposium at AFS 2017 in Tampa; support participation by selected state Artificial Reef Committee members and staff Coordinator.

#### 4.2 Educate Commissioners, stakeholders, and the general public about the importance of habitat to healthy fisheries and ecosystems.

Task 4.2.1 – Facilitate coordination and distribution of information for ecosystem-based management and marine protected area activities, and the potential consequences of significant anthropogenic activities on habitats of concern.

Task 4.2.2 – Participate in regional and national habitat meetings and scientific conferences to facilitate increased communication with agencies and programs that have jurisdiction over habitat.

Task 4.2.3 – Publish annual issue of *Habitat Hotline Atlantic*.

Task 4.2.4 – Review and update the Habitat Management Series: *Living Shorelines and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation* for ISFMP Policy Board review and acceptance. Identify a subsequent topic (e.g. climate change, sand mining, power plant impingement, document, innovative wetland restoration techniques).

4.3 Engage local, state, and regional governments in mutually beneficial habitat protection and enhancement programs through partnerships.

Task 4.3.1 – Work with ACFHP to foster partnerships with like-minded organizations at local levels to further common habitat goals.

Task 4.3.2 – Provide stakeholders with the tools to effectively communicate, promote and accomplish habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement programs at the local level.

Task 4.3.3 – Serve as a point of contact and information conduit at the Commission for energy-related issues affecting fish habitat.

Task 4.3.4 – Coordinate the activities of the Fish Passage Working Group (FPWG) to carry out priority tasks as defined by the ISFMP Policy Board. Promote development of effective fish passage approaches and projects through state and federal collaboration.

Subtask 4.3.4.1 – Maintain a coastwide database of dams, dam removals, fishways, and passage efficiency studies. Collaborate with NGOs to incorporate the database in their passage prioritization tools.

Subtask 4.3.4.2 – Implement the fish passage prioritization protocol, maintain a coastwide list of passage project priorities, and develop performance criteria to evaluate passage projects' success.

Subtask 4.3.4.3 – Establish coastwide fish passage targets and add to diadromous species FMPs as amendments/addenda are developed; assist in developing targets for the Federal Energy and Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing on the Santee-Cooper River system.

Subtask 4.3.4.4 – Monitor and participate in upcoming FERC relicensing projects; develop guidance for state staff for navigating the FERC dam relicensing process, in order to more effectively improve passage in relicensing prescriptions.

Subtask 4.3.4.5 – Summarize and distribute results of survey describing positive and negative consequences of providing fish passage through consultation with the diadromous technical committees.

Subtask 4.3.4.6 – Respond to state requests for information on fish passage, including FERC relicensing issues, fishway design, and restoration/escapement guidelines.

Task 4.3.5 – Continue to provide coordination support for ACFHP, under the direction of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP) Board.

Subtask 4.3.5.1 – Facilitate communication and outreach with ACFHP partners, overlapping partnerships, and new partners. Develop outreach materials and maintain the ACFHP website.

Subtask 4.3.5.2 – Coordinate the implementation of the 5-year ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan, including development of an Implementation Plan outlining tasks by year to achieve the goals, objectives, and actions in the Strategic Plan.

Subtask 4.3.5.3 – Support the completion of priority ACFHP Science and Data projects - acquire and analyze fish population, habitat, and human impact data for the Southeast and Northeast using GIS mapping; make results available to Partners for the purpose of strategic coastal habitat conservation.

Subtask 4.3.5.4 – Through ACFHP, and in cooperation with other Fish Habitat Partnerships and the National Fish Habitat Board, work with partners to identify and implement monitoring and data standards for assessment of coastal habitat condition and fishery resource status prior to and following alteration projects.

Subtask 4.3.5.5 – Assist in obtaining future funding to support ACFHP operations and fish habitat conservation projects.

4.4 Foster partnerships with management agencies, researchers, and habitat stakeholders to leverage regulatory, political, and financial support.

Task 4.4.1 – Provide information or comment on Atlantic coast projects and permits in accordance with ASMFC project review protocol.

Task 4.4.2 – Solicit funding and promote fish habitat research through diverse activities including partnerships, funding opportunities, workshops, identification of research needs and other strategies.

Task 4.4.3 – Identify partnership opportunities and forge additional relationships with organizations – such as non-governmental organizations and the recreational fishing community – to facilitate the promotion of fish habitat through a collaboration of strengths of different stakeholder groups.

Task 4.4.5 – Seek improvements to habitat webpages, continue to use social media to connect with regional and local decision makers, and otherwise more effectively disseminate the work of the Habitat Committee.

4.5 Identify mechanisms to evaluate ecosystem health.

Task 4.5.1 – Review habitat program goals and evaluate accomplishments annually.

Task 4.5.2 – Work with state and federal agencies, the Councils, and non-governmental organizations to build on existing coastwide GIS efforts, to identify important fish habitats for Commission managed species as defined in the ACFHP Species-Habitat matrix.

4.6 Engage in state and federal agency efforts to ensure climate change response strategies are included in habitat conservation efforts.

Task 4.6.1 – As revisions to habitat sections of FMPs are made include recommendations that account for climate change in fisheries management decisions.

Task 4.6.2 – Identify gaps in state coastal regulatory planning regarding climate change impacts and make recommendations to increase resiliency.

Task 4.6.3 – Increase communication on ecosystem based management with Commission committees to find overlap with fish habitat related issues.

### **Goal 5 – Strengthen stakeholder and public support for the Commission**

Stakeholder and public acceptance of Commission decisions are critical to our ultimate success. For the Commission to be effective, these groups must have a clear understanding of our mission, vision, and decision-making processes. The goal seeks to do so through expanded outreach and education efforts about Commission programs, decision-making processes, and its management successes and challenges. It aims to engage stakeholders in the process of fisheries management, and promote the activities and accomplishments of the Commission. Achieving the goal will increase stakeholder participation, understanding, and acceptance of Commission activities.

#### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

5.1 Increase public understanding and support of activities through expanded outreach at the local, state, and federal levels.

Task 5.1.1 – Publish bi-monthly issues of *Fisheries Focus*. Continue to reduce mailing/printing costs through greater electronic distribution.

Task 5.1.2 – Use website to promote ASMFC activities to state and federal partners and stakeholders.

Task 5.1.3 – Promote ASMFC through attendance at fisheries-related trade shows and conferences.



Task 5.1.4 – Promote Commission activities regarding recently assessed and/or high profile species, habitat and law enforcement activities, as well as emerging issues such as fishery allocations and shifting populations due to climate change, to a broader constituency through mechanisms such as targeted press releases, informational brochures, webpage highlights and conference/trade show participation.

Task 5.1.5 – Develop and distribute youth-based educational materials designed to increase awareness of fisheries science and understating of fisheries management to key venues (e.g., teacher kits, Eco-camps, charter boat operations, aquatic educators) to help promote marine stewardship and ocean literacy.

Task 5.1.6 – Collaborate with East Coast Aquaria (New England, Baltimore, North Carolina, Virginia) and relevant partners to promote interstate fisheries management and science activities at the aquaria.

Task 5.1.7 – Promote Commission’s mission and programs through outreach meetings with various marine policy and marine science graduate programs.

Task 5.1.8 – Participate in the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils Marine Resource Education Program.

Task 5.1.9 – Prepare brief, simplified stock assessment overview presentations for posting on YouTube and ASMFC Fisheries Science 101 webpage for black sea bass and Atlantic sturgeon.

Task 5.1.10 – Explore use of story mapping and photo journaling to better communicate science and management activities. (click on the following links to see examples - <http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=7530f28f065c486ba0420ca8e26a13f4>; <http://portal.midatlanticocean.org/ocean-stories/new-recreational-data-covers-coast/>; <https://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=728a6cc901f44845be430faa21151535>)

**Task 5.1.11 - Solicit outside sources to develop short video clips of fisheries management and science activities.**

5.2 Clearly define Commission processes to facilitate stakeholder participation, as well as transparency and accountability.

Task 5.2.1 – Publish and distribute 2016 Annual Report to Congress, state legislators, and stakeholders to provide overview of our activities and progress in carrying out the Commission’s mission and public trust responsibilities.

Task 5.2.2 – Prepare Stock Assessment Overviews (in layman’s terms) for benchmark and stock assessment updates to facilitate stakeholder understanding of the science behind our management decisions. Focal species for 2017 are black sea bass, Atlantic

croaker, red drum, spot, Atlantic sturgeon, northern shrimp, Atlantic menhaden, and river herring.

Task 5.2.3 – Enhance engagement in advisory panels and through solicitation of new members and increased participation of existing members (See Tasks 1.6.1 and 1.6.3).

Task 5.2.4 – Develop outreach materials that highlight opportunities for public engagement in the Commission’s fisheries management and stock assessment processes. (See Task 2.3.3)

Task 5.2.5 – Develop a fisheries management 101 page for the website.

5.3 Strengthen national, regional, and local media relations to increase coverage of Commission actions.

Task 5.3.1 – Track media communications and coverage through ASMFC-related news clippings and media tracking sheet.

Task 5.3.2 – Conduct a training workshop for science and ISFMP staff on story mapping and photo journaling to expand staff skill set and enhance communication tools.

Task 5.3.3 – Conduct annual meeting of Atlantic Coast Fisheries Communication Group, comprised of Public Information Officers from the Councils, states and federal agencies, to share successful tools, identify key media contacts and work cooperatively on joint projects.

5.4 Use new technologies and communication platforms to more fully engage the broader public in the Commission’s activities and actions.

Task 5.4.1 – Use social media tools to increase ASMFC visibility and improve stakeholder engagement.

Task 5.4.2. – Use website capabilities (e.g., video clips) to promote Fisheries Science 101 webinars, videos of fisheries surveys and state on-the-ground projects.

Task 5.4.3 – Monitor the success of website and social media platforms in reaching broader constituency and effectively communicating ASMFC mission, programs and activities.

**Goal 6 – Advance Commission and member states’ priorities through a proactive legislative policy agenda**

Although states are positioned to achieve many of the national goals for marine fisheries through cooperative efforts, state fisheries interests are often underrepresented at the national level. This is due, in part, to the fact that policy formulation is often disconnected from the processes that provide the support, organization, and resources necessary to

implement the policies. The capabilities and input of the states are an important aspect of developing national fisheries policy, and the goal seeks to increase the states' role in national policy formulation. Additionally, the goal emphasizes the importance of achieving management goals consistent with productive commercial and recreational fisheries and healthy ecosystems.

The Commission recognizes the need to work with Congress in all phases of policy formulation. Several important fishery-related laws will be reauthorized over the next couple of years (i.e., Atlantic Coastal Act, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, and Anadromous Fish Conservation Act). The Commission will be vigilant in advocating the states' interests to Congress as these laws are reauthorized and other fishery-related pieces of legislation are considered.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

6.1 Increase the Commission's profile and support in the U.S. Congress by developing relationships between Members and their staff and Commissioners, the Executive Director, and Commission staff.

Task 6.1.1 – Provide opportunities for in person Commissioner interactions with Members and congressional staff during Meeting Weeks.

Task 6.1.2 – Provide opportunities for the Executive Director to meet with congressional staff on a regular basis.

Task 6.1.3 – Focus interactions on Members of Congress from Atlantic coast states and those that serve on committees of importance to the Commission:

- House and Senate Commerce Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittees
- House Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee
- Senate Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard Subcommittee of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee

Task 6.1.4 – Make connections (via correspondence and in-person meetings) with newly elected Atlantic coast members of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and appropriate Committee Chairs and members.

6.2 Communicate the Commission's federal funding needs to Congress and advocate for sufficient appropriations.

Task 6.2.1 – Clearly convey funding needs to congressional staff.

Task 6.2.2 – Justify the need for federal dollars by the Commission through demonstrating the social, economic, and ecological benefits of Commission activities.

Task 6.2.3 – Work with Commissioners to identify funding needs and develop a strategy to secure funding for priority programs (Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants, Stock Assessments line item, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, and Fisheries Information Networks). Seek funding for long-term monitoring surveys including Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl, NEAMAP, and SEAMAP. (See Task 1.1.51)

Task 6.2.4 – Demonstrate the value of the Commission as an effective management entity and resource to Members of Congress and their staffs.

Task 6.2.5 – Provide state-specific perspectives to staff and Members in meetings, especially management successes and challenges.

Task 6.2.6 – Contact home state Commissioners before communicating with Members or Congressional staff to get a local perspective.

Task 6.2.7 – Coordinate with the Gulf, Pacific, and Great Lakes Commissions on policy items of mutual interest including federal funding for fisheries programs. Executive Directors should continue providing unified positions on funding and legislative priorities to lawmakers and federal agencies, where appropriate.

Task 6.2.8 – Communicate Commission funding needs to NOAA Fisheries.

### 6.3 Engage Congress on *fishery-related legislation affecting the Atlantic coast.*

Task 6.3.1 – Monitor federal legislation affecting the Commission, including policy and annual appropriations bills and develop Commission positions on pending federal legislation, including the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act, in addition to new legislation addressing emerging issues such as marine national monuments and alternative energy initiatives.

Task 6.3.2 – Update Commissioners on pending congressional actions that may affect fisheries management as appropriate.

Task 6.3.3 – Coordinate with the Legislative Committee and Government Relations firm to identify relevant policy and legislative issues.

Task 6.3.4 – Monitor congressional hearings related to fisheries issues, and testify or provide statements for the record when appropriate.

Task 6.3.5 – Engage Commissioners in the formulation of the Commission’s position on federal legislative policy.

6.4 Promote member states’ collective interests at the regional and national levels

Task 6.4.1 – Communicate member states’ needs to Congress and our management partners.

Subtask 6.4.1.1 – Contact Commissioners before and after congressional meetings.

Subtask 6.4.1.2 – Facilitate opportunities for Commissioners to communicate directly with their Legislators and staff.

Task 6.4.2 – Participate with national organizations and management partners to address issues of mutual interest.

Subtask 6.4.2.1 – Conduct interagency coordination meetings (Memorandum of Understanding) under ACFCMA to improve state-federal partnerships.

Subtask 6.4.2.2 – Continue to serve as an advisor to Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC).

Subtask 6.4.2.3 – Continue to participate as a member on the Marine Fisheries Initiative (MARFIN) panel.

Subtask 6.4.2.4 – Continue to participate with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

6.5 Promote economic benefits of the Commission’s actions (return on investment).

Task 6.5.1 – Provide state-specific economic and jobs statistics related to commercial and recreational marine fishing to lawmakers and staff.

Task 6.5.2 – Use specific examples to show successful management can be linked to economic success and increased jobs.

Task 6.5.3 – Demonstrate the differences between federal and state fishery management tools and the economic benefits of the state management approach (flexibility, closer to stakeholders, quicker response time).

## **Goal 7 – Ensure the fiscal stability & efficient administration of the Commission**

Goal 7 will ensure that the business affairs of the Commission are managed effectively and efficiently, including workload balancing through the development of annual action plans to support the Commission’s management process. It also highlights the need for the Commission to efficiently manage its resources. The goal promotes the efficient use of legal advice to proactively review policies and react to litigation as necessary. It also promotes human resource policies that attract talented and committed individuals to conduct the work of the Commission. The goal highlights the need for the Commission as an organization to continually expand its skill set through training and educational opportunities. It calls for Commissioners and Commission staff to maintain and increase the institutional knowledge of the Commission through periods of transition. Achieving this goal will build core strengths, enabling the Commission to respond to increasingly difficult and complex fisheries management issues.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

- 7.1 Conservatively manage the Commission’s operations and budgets to ensure fiscal stability.
  - Task 7.1.1 – Monitor and update as necessary guidelines for cost effective meeting locations and meeting attendee travel policies.
  - Task 7.1.2 – Responsibly manage and review as necessary the Commission’s reserve fund according to the approved investment policy. Review investments annually with AOC.
  - Task 7.1.3 – Submit a Certification of Indirect Cost to the Department of Commerce.
  - Task 7.1.4 – Monitor expenditures on a monthly basis and project variances to ensure complete and timely use of available funds relative to grant cycles. Distribute monthly financial report to Senior Staff.
  - Task 7.1.5 – Prepare for and work cooperatively with CPA firm to conduct annual audit.
  - Task 7.1.6 – Launch Inventory module in accounting software to electronically track physical inventory. Update physical inventory.
  - Task 7.1.7 – Continue to provide administrative support to MRIP, including human resources and meeting management, grant and financial monitoring and office space.
  - Task 7.1.8 – Continue to provide administrative support to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), including logistical support for committee meetings and other Partnership activities.
  - Task 7.1.9 – Fully incorporate ACCSP into the Commission under the new governance structure.

Task 7.1.10 – Appoint Investment Committee for Commission’s retirement program.

Task 7.1.11 – Revise Commission’s retirement documents to ensure qualifications for participation in the plans are clearly and accurately defined.

Task 7.1.12 – Develop Commission compensation plan with updated job classifications and salaries based on location.

Task 7.1.13 – Develop SOPPs that detail human resource policies for Arlington-based and state-based employees.

Task 7.1.14 – Conduct comprehensive review and revision of Employee Handbook.

7.2 Utilize new information technology to improve meeting and workload efficiencies, and enhance communications.

Task 7.2.1 – Ensure consistency of software across the Commission and continue to cross-train administrative staff.

Task 7.2.2 – Provide targeted staff training for full use of office equipment and software.

Task 7.2.3 – Document standards for electronic record retention and develop site map of Commission electronic filing system for internal use, including protocols for document archiving.

Task 7.2.4 – Continue to audit Commission databases to verify contacts and relevant information.

Task 7.2.5 – Review SOPPs annually and revise as necessary.

7.3 Refine strategies to recruit professional staff, and enhance growth and learning opportunities for Commission and state personnel

Task 7.3.1 – Promote Commission’s programs and activities and recruit new talent by conducting seminars to graduate level marine programs.

Task 7.3.2 – Provide opportunities for undergrad and graduate students to participate in summer internships at the Commission.

Task 7.3.3 – Review and revise position descriptions as necessary.

Task 7.3.4 – Review vacancy announcement distribution list and update as necessary.

Task 7.3.5 – Conduct stock assessment methods training workshops. (See Task 2.5.1)

Task 7.3.6 – Facilitate staff participation at national and regional conferences; provide professional training opportunities.

Task 7.3.7 – Facilitate educational opportunities targeted to specific staff based on job responsibilities and facilitate participation.

Task 7.3.8 – Communicate human resources support available to state-based employees.

Task 7.3.9 – Conduct annual meeting with financial advisor to review retirement program performance with staff and provide opportunities for staff and provide opportunities for staff to meet individually with financial advisor to match financial goals with investment choices for retirement.

7.4 Fully engage new Commissioners in the Commission process and document institutional knowledge.

Task 7.4.1 – Work with Executive Committee to determine the appropriate transition and orientation program for new Commissioners.

Task 7.4.2 – Update, on an ongoing basis, the Commissioner Manual. Inform Commissioners when the update is substantial, no less than twice a year.

Task 7.4.3 – Continue to provide orientation materials for new members of Commission supporting committees.

7.5 Utilize legal advice on new management strategies and policies, and respond to litigation as necessary.

Task 7.5.1 – Respond as needed to litigation regarding challenges to Commission FMPs.

Task 7.5.2 – Work with Commission attorney to develop a potential information request policy for consideration by full Commission (FOIA equivalent).

Task 7.5.3 – Ensure annual submission of Conflict of Interest form by Legislative and Governor Appointee Commissioners.

Task 7.5.4 – Continue to work with human resources attorney to ensure all human resources practices are consistent with states laws.



## Appendix 1 - FY17 Action Plan for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

This plan is intended to provide guidance in achieving the goals of the ACCSP in FY2017 (March 1, 2017 – February 28, 2018). References within this plan are to the ACCSP 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

### 8. ACCSP

- 8.1 Manage and expand a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data;
  - 8.1.1 Current data warehouse feeds will continue to be maintained and enhanced.
  - 8.1.2 Progress will be made in populating the biological tables in the Data Warehouse
  - 8.1.3 Progress will be made in populating the Bycatch data set in the Data Warehouse
  - 8.1.4 The new query interface will be monitored and adjusted based on feedback from the end users and research conducted by staff and the Information Systems Committee
  
- 8.2 Continue working with the program partners to improve fisheries data collection and management in accordance with the evolving ACCSP standards within the confines of limited funds;
  - 8.2.1 SAFIS will be maintained and enhanced based on requirements from the program partners
  - 8.2.2 Manage the APAIS and other related recreational data collection and management systems.
  - 8.2.3 A collaborative SAFIS redevelopment process will provide functional requirements for an integrated reporting system based on the prior year's visioning process. A redevelopment plan will be drafted based on these functional requirements and software development will begin.
  - 8.2.4 The LOBSTAH system will be fully deployed and in maintenance mode.
  - 8.2.5 Tablet and phone based versions of SAFIS will continue to be developed and deployed.
  
- 8.3 Explore the allocation of existing Program funds and work with partners to pursue additional funding;
  - 8.3.1 ACCSP will continue to manage the funding process in accordance with the Funding Decision Document
  - 8.3.2 The performance of funded projects will be tracked by the Operations Committee.
  - 8.3.3 Revisions to the process will be made as needed based on constituent input.

- 8.4 Maintain strong executive leadership and collaborative involvement among partners at all committee levels;
  - 8.4.1 The Coordinating Council will meet quarterly in order to provide Executive level managers with the most up-to-date information and an opportunity to provide direct input into the Program.
  - 8.4.2 Technical and policy level constituent committees will meet regularly to review and modify technical standards and make policy recommendations to the Coordinating Council
  
- 8.5 Monitor and improve the usefulness of products and services provided by the ACCSP;
  - 8.5.1 Metrics will be monitored. These include the collection of system usage statistics, user surveys, and data load and availability statistics. The metrics will be distributed throughout the year, but will be summarized in the Annual Report.
  - 8.5.2 Maintain a clear line of communications between Program Staff and our constituents.
  - 8.5.3 Ensure that there is a feedback loop to gauge the success of the Program in meeting the needs of its constituents.
  
- 8.6 Collaborate with program partners in their funding processes by providing outreach materials and other support to demonstrate the value of ACCSP products and the importance of maintaining base support for fishery-dependent data collection programs to state partners and their executive and legislative branches as well as to all other partner agencies
  - 8.6.1 Established outreach processes will continue. These include: routine automated updates for meetings, changes and/or updates in data and significant events, quarterly newsletters, data sheets detailing the status of the Program, articles in 'Fisheries Focus', and the preparation and publication of the Annual Report.
  - 8.6.2 Outreach will maintain a schedule of fisheries related events, reviewing them periodically to identify opportunities to establish or improve stakeholder communications. Appropriate staff will be detailed to these events to ensure that the ACCSP is represented.
  - 8.6.3 Staff will track various stock assessments, conferences, and other data intensive activities with an eye towards participating as fully as possible. Data will be provided where appropriate. This task would include the presentation of papers or posters in support of Program objectives.
  
- 8.7 Support nationwide systems as defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).
  - 8.7.1 ACCSP will continue to participate in both the FIS and MRIP programs, providing resources as appropriate to the various committees of the programs.
  - 8.7.2 In accordance with the MSA, ACCSP will provide data for the Atlantic Coast to the FIS when requested.