

# ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

## 2018 Action Plan



Approved October 2017

## **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, socioeconomic 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 – Continue to monitor state compliance with provisions of Addendum IV. Assist states in implementing and monitoring yellow eel quotas in 2018 if triggered.

Task 1.1.2 – Consider management response to the 2017 assessment update findings specific to allocations and quotas, if necessary.

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

Task 1.1.4 – Develop Memorandum of Understanding on management and scientific collaboration with Great Lakes Fishery Commission, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

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 – Through the Technical Committee, review life cycle survey in the State of Maine to estimate incremental survival across life stages. Review any additional state life cycle survey proposals. Update the young-of-the-year index with 2017 data.

Evaluate monitoring efforts to identify gaps in and the value of existing surveys for assessment and management use.

Task 1.1.7 – Through Technical Committee, review state aquaculture proposals as submitted.

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 XXVI to improve harvester reporting and biological data collection in state and federal waters.

Task 1.1.10 – Finalize and implement Addendum XXVII to consider the standardization of management measures in the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank stock.

Task 1.1.11 – Develop a strategy for management of the Southern New England stock that considers the record low abundance of the stock, preserves a functional portion of the fishery, and acknowledges the effects of climate change.

Task 1.1.12 – Initiate the 2020 Benchmark Stock Assessment.

Task 1.1.13 – Continue to work with the Law Enforcement Subcommittee and states to improve enforcement of management measures and develop a strategy for offshore enforcement.

Task 1.1.14 – Coordinate and monitor trap tag production and distribution.

Task 1.1.15 – Continue to work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistency between regulations in state and federal waters, particularly in regards to season closures implemented through Addendum XVII and trap banking provisions in Addendum XXII.

Task 1.1.16 – Update lobster landings and trap tag databases and monitor lobster landings and effort patterns.

Task 1.1.17 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management parameters and state compliance.

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

Task 1.1.18 – Monitor relevant research projects to determine remaining data deficiencies and promote collaborative research between the states, NOAA Fisheries, and industry.

Task 1.1.19 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance. Continue to work with NOAA Fisheries to ensure consistency between regulations in state and federal waters.

### **Atlantic Herring**

Task 1.1.20 – Work in collaboration with Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to complete a benchmark stock assessment. Consider management response to the assessment findings in conjunction with New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), if necessary.

Task 1.1.21 – Evaluate the efficacy of the management goals and objectives of the spawning closures using the GSI forecasting system.

Task 1.1.22 – Set specifications for 2019 and beyond based on new assessment information. Set Area 1A specifications for 2019.

Task 1.1.23 – Monitor and participate in activities of the 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 1.2.6).

Task 1.1.24 – Conduct meetings as necessary to establish state effort control (days-out) programs for Areas 1A and 1B.

Task 1.1.25 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Atlantic Menhaden**

Task 1.1.26 – Monitor state implementation of Amendment 3.

Task 1.1.27 – 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).

Task 1.1.28 – Initiate the 2019 benchmark stock assessment.

Task 1.1.29 – Monitor the 2018 episodic events set aside quota, if necessary, and set the 2019 fishery specifications.

Task 1.1.30 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Atlantic Striped Bass**

Task 1.1.31 – Complete the 2018 benchmark stock assessment, which will include

fleet- and sex-specific analyses, as well as regional models, and consider management response, if necessary.

Task 1.1.32 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Atlantic Sturgeon**

Task 1.1.33 – Consider management response to the 2017 benchmark stock assessment, if necessary.

Task 1.1.34 – Monitor state and federal activities in response to an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing of Atlantic sturgeon, including 5-year status review.

Task 1.1.35 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Bluefish**

Task 1.1.36 – Collaborate with the MAFMC to initiate the development of an amendment to address allocation.

Task 1.1.37 – Collaborate with NEFSC to complete an operational stock assessment, pending availability of updated Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) estimates. Consider management response to the assessment findings in conjunction with MAFMC, if necessary.

Task 1.1.38 – Review specifications for 2019 in cooperation with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.39 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Coastal Sharks**

Task 1.1.40 – Establish specifications for 2019 and beyond in coordination with NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Division.

Task 1.1.41 – Monitor and consider development of complementary management actions as needed.

Task 1.1.42 – Monitor activities of NOAA Fisheries and HMS with regards to coastal shark management actions for consistency.

Task 1.1.43 – Monitor stock assessment results for sandbar and mako sharks and provide technical committee recommendations for a management response, if necessary.

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

### **Horseshoe Crab**

Task 1.1.45 – Establish the 2019 specifications using the Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) Framework and quota allocation methodology.

Task 1.1.46 – 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 (See Task 6.2.3).

Task 1.1.47 – Engage the biomedical community in finding a solution regarding confidential data use in order to enhance stock assessments and scientific advice for management.

Task 1.1.48 – Finalize the 2018 benchmark stock assessment that includes individual assessments of regional populations and biomedical data, where appropriate, and consider management response, if necessary.

Task 1.1.49 – Monitor red knot listing under the ESA.

Task 1.1.50 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance for both the bait and biomedical industries.

### **Northern Shrimp**

Task 1.1.51 – Finalize the 2018 benchmark stock assessment and consider management response to the assessment findings, if necessary.

Task 1.1.52 – Establish specifications for the 2018/2019 season. Consider industry test tows to collect biological data, if necessary and as resources allow.

Task 1.1.53 – Implement Amendment 3 as appropriate given the stock status of northern shrimp.

Task 1.1.54 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **Shad and River Herring**

Task 1.1.55 – Initiate the 2019 American shad benchmark stock assessment.

Task 1.1.56 – Monitor the activities of NOAA Fisheries regarding the ESA status review of river herring; respond if necessary.

Task 1.1.57 – Monitor management activities of the NEFMC and the MAFMC including, but not limited to, shad and river herring catch caps and bycatch avoidance programs (See Task 1.2.6).

Task 1.1.58 – Review products of the River Herring Technical Expert Working Group and consider for management use.

Task 1.1.59 – Review and update American shad habitat plans as required by Amendment 3, if necessary.

Task 1.1.60 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

### **South Atlantic Species**

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

Task 1.1.61 – Conduct analyses to explore and potentially update the annual Traffic Light Analysis (TLA) to include additional indices or age composition information.

Task 1.1.62 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

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

Task 1.1.63 – Implement and finalize Addendum I to consider a commercial fishery in Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Task 1.1.64 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

#### ***Cobia***

Task 1.1.65 – Implement the Cobia FMP and work with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and NOAA Fisheries to ensure complementary regulations between state and federal waters.

Task 1.1.66 – Monitor activities of the SAFMC to ensure consistency between state and federal management programs.

Task 1.1.67 – Collaborate with the SouthEast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) to conduct the Stock Identification Workshop in preparation for the 2019 Benchmark Stock Assessment.

Task 1.1.68 – Collaborate with SEDAR to initiate the 2019 benchmark stock assessment.

Task 1.1.69 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

#### ***Red Drum***

Task 1.1.70 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spanish Mackerel***

Task 1.1.71 – Review annual report from North Carolina concerning Addendum I to the FMP. Consider changes to the management program, if necessary.

Task 1.1.72 – Monitor activities of the SAFMC to ensure consistency between state and federal management programs.

Task 1.1.73 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spot***

Task 1.1.74 – Conduct analyses to explore and potentially update the annual TLA to include additional indices or age composition information.

Task 1.1.75 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Spotted Seatrout***

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

***Spiny Dogfish***

Task 1.1.77 – Review established specifications for 2019/2020.

Task 1.1.78 – Participate in annual stock status update, as needed.

Task 1.1.79 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

**Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass**

***Summer Flounder***

Task 1.1.80 – Continue development of the Comprehensive Summer Flounder amendment, considering changes to commercial management in coordination with MAFMC.

Task 1.1.81 – Finalize regulations for 2018 recreational fishery.

Task 1.1.82 – Review 2019 specifications in collaboration with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.83 – Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC to finalize the 2018 benchmark stock assessment, including a sex-specific stock assessment modeling approach; consider management response, if necessary.

Task 1.1.84 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.



***Scup***

Task 1.1.85 – Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC to finalize the 2018 operational stock assessment, pending availability of updated MRIP estimates, and consider management response if necessary.

Task 1.1.86 – Finalize regulations for 2018 recreational fishery.

Task 1.1.87 – Review 2019 specifications in collaboration with the MAFMC.

Task 1.1.88 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Black Sea Bass***

Task 1.1.89 – Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries and NEFSC to finalize the 2018 operational stock assessment, pending availability of updated MRIP estimates, and consider management response if necessary.

Task 1.1.90 – Finalize and implement an addendum to consider recreational fishing measures for 2018 and beyond.

Task 1.1.91 – Collaborate with the MAFMC to initiate a Black Sea Bass Amendment.

Task 1.1.92 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Tautog***

Task 1.1.93 – Implement management measures and commercial harvest tagging program as required by Amendment 1.

Task 1.1.94 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Weakfish***

Task 1.1.95 – Continue to develop the 2019 benchmark stock assessment.

Task 1.1.96 – Monitor fishery for consistency with management program and state compliance.

***Winter Flounder***

Task 1.1.97 – Review the 2018 GARM stock assessment for inshore winter flounder stocks and consider management response in coordination with NEFMC and the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), if necessary.

Task 1.1.98 – Continue to monitor federal common pool landings and regulations.

Task 1.1.99 – 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 Regional Fishery Management Councils and committees regarding matters of mutual interest.

Task 1.2.2 – Participate on the NRCC and SEDAR 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 NOAA Headquarters and regional leadership to improve alignment of state/federal budget priorities.

Task 1.2.5 – Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries and the Secretary of Commerce to ensure the transparency and integrity of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (Atlantic Coastal Act) provisions are preserved.

Task 1.2.6 – Continue to work with NEFMC and MAFMC on evaluating and mitigating shad and river herring bycatch (See Task 1.1.22 and 1.1.55).

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

Task 1.2.8 – Seek opportunities to collaborate with NOAA Fisheries as it conducts ESA status reviews for Atlantic sturgeon and river herring.

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.

Task 1.3.2 – Determine next steps in response to the Commission’s climate change white paper to address fisheries impacted by climate change.

Task 1.3.3 – Work with NOAA leadership to better understand the impacts to state management programs given the movement toward increased recreational flexibility. Seek ways to address the concerns of the recreational community with regard to Commission-managed and jointly-managed species.

Subtask 1.3.3.1 – Assist in conducting and participate in NOAA Fisheries’ 2018 National Recreational Fisheries Summit.

Task 1.3.4 – Consider approval of Risk and Uncertainty Policy for management use (See Task 2.1.13).

Task 1.3.5 – Respond to new MRIP estimates as needed across Commission species management plans.

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.

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

Task 1.6.1 – Engage American lobster, summer flounder, black sea bass, horseshoe crab, and bluefish advisory panels (APs) in the development of FMPs and Amendments. Solicit state membership of current active APs and appoint new membership where necessary (See Task 5.2.3).

Task 1.6.2 – Continue communication with non-active advisory panels (species in the maintenance mode).

Task 1.6.3 – 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, spot age data, black drum biological sampling and fishery-independent monitoring of mature fish, American eel surveys covering all life stages, red drum recreational discard size composition, and sturgeon bycatch monitoring in state waters.

Task 2.1.2 – Complete benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic herring, horseshoe crab, northern shrimp, striped bass, and summer flounder, and initiate assessment for American shad. Complete operational assessments for bluefish, scup, and black sea bass, assessment updates for northern shrimp, and spiny dogfish, and initiate assessment update for weakfish.

Task 2.1.3 – Conduct independent peer reviews of the horseshoe crab and northern shrimp stock assessments; coordinate with SAW/SARC on planning reviews of summer flounder and striped bass.

Task 2.1.4 – Develop a long-term vision for scientific initiatives within the Commission's next 5-year Strategic Plan, led by the Management and Science Committee (MSC) and Assessment Science Committee (ASC).

Task 2.1.5 – Through the ASC and 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, design and conduct a Data Best Practices Workshop and expand Fishery-Independent Survey Database to promote efficient assessment report compilation.

Task 2.1.8 – Consult with ASC on red drum stock assessment guidance and provide a road map for improved data collection and future assessment to the South Atlantic Management Board.

Task 2.1.9 – Monitor the progress of cobia research projects and contribute to stock identification workshop in preparation for the 2019 SEDAR stock assessment.

Task 2.1.10 – Serve as members of the American lobster, American shad, Horseshoe Crab, Northern Shrimp, Striped Bass, and Bluefish 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 2.1.11 – Participate on the Technical Expert Working Group for River Herring and associated subgroups.

Task 2.1.12 – Continue to work with state and federal stock assessment scientists and staff from the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) to use ACCSP data in the Commission’s technical work.

Task 2.1.13 – Through the Risk and Uncertainty Policy Workgroup, develop a Commission policy regarding risk and uncertainty for consideration and approval by the ISFMP Policy Board (See Task 1.3.4).

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

Task 2.2.1 – Update the Research Priorities as benchmark assessments are completed and new priorities emerge; distribute Research Priorities to the states, NOAA Fisheries, USFWS, Sea Grant, and university researchers.

Task 2.2.2 – Integrate research priorities into FMP reviews for approval by species management boards.

Task 2.2.3 – Partner with US Geological Survey to identify shared priorities and opportunities for enhanced scientific support to the Commission.

Task 2.2.4 – Participate in proposal reviews for NOAA Fisheries Cooperative Research Programs, Saltonstall-Kennedy, Research Set-Aside, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), ACCSP, MARFIN, and MARMAP, when requested, to evaluate projects and monitor new research activities to promote the states' needs.

Subtask 2.2.4.1 – Work with federal partners to ensure funded projects are reviewed and communicated to technical committees and boards.

Task 2.2.5 – Communicate with 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 2.2.6 – Participate on the ACCSP's Coordinating Council, Operations Committee, Bycatch Prioritization Committee, Biological Review Panel, Recreational and Commercial Technical Committees, Outreach Committee and Computer Technical Committee.

Task 2.2.7 – Coordinate and implement the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP).

Subtask 2.2.7.1 – Administer funding to conduct 2018 NEAMAP Nearshore Trawl Surveys (Mid-Atlantic, Maine/New Hampshire).

Subtask 2.2.7.2 – Continue to implement a strategy to identify future funding needs to address annual funding shortfalls for the Mid-Atlantic/Southern New England and Maine/New Hampshire Trawl Surveys.

Subtask 2.2.7.3 – 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 2.2.7.4 – Develop the 2018 NEAMAP Operations Plan.

Subtask 2.2.7.5 – 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 2.2.8 – Coordinate the South Atlantic component of the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP).

Subtask 2.2.8.1 – 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 Habitat Characterization and Fish Assessment, Data Management, Crustacean, Coastal Trawl Survey, and the Coastal Longline Survey Workgroups.

Subtask 2.2.8.2 – Continue to implement the 2016-2020 SEAMAP Management Plan; 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 2.2.8.3 – Participate in the expansion of SEAMAP-South Atlantic fishery-independent data coordination and mapping, as resources allow.

Subtask 2.2.8.4 – Coordinate South Atlantic activities with the Gulf and Caribbean components of SEAMAP.

Task 2.2.9 – 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 2.2.10 – Develop long-term strategy for collecting striped bass tagging data, including funding, administration, and at-sea support.

Task 2.2.11 – Continue to participate in the implementation of improvements to the 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 2.2.11.1 – Participate in the MRIP effort survey time series calibration for use in upcoming stock assessments and potential changes to management.

Subtask 2.2.11.2 – Continue to highlight concerns regarding delays in releases of Wave data and final annual estimates.

Task 2.2.12 – Coordinate fish ageing activities among Atlantic coast states and university laboratories in order to provide consistent, accurate age data to stock assessments.

Subtask 2.2.12.1 – Conduct an ageing workshop for American eel to prepare laboratories for providing new age data consistent with historical age data.

Subtask 2.2.12.2 – Conduct an annual Fish Ageing Quality Control Workshop using age sample reference collections for multiple species to maintain consistency among state and university ageing technicians.

Subtask 2.2.12.3 – Distribute to all ageing labs the Atlantic and Gulf coasts fish ageing manual with fish ageing protocols.

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 Commission, including the development of new ACCSP socioeconomic data standards.

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

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 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 and distribute information on citizen science initiatives through the SAFMC, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, 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 1.1.26).

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 inform the Commission’s ecosystem models (e.g. diet studies, surveys of spawning and nursery habitats).



Task 2.4.4 – Through the MSC and Climate Change Work Group, track the development of state and federal activities related to climate change and impacts to fisheries (See Task 1.3.1).

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.

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 Commission staff scientists.

Task 2.5.1 – Conduct introductory and advanced stock assessment methods training workshops (See Task 7.3.4).

Task 2.5.2 – 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 cobia, coastal sharks, American lobster, tautog, black sea bass, menhaden, summer flounder, and other ASMFC-managed species as requested.

Task 3.1.3 – Continue working with the Tautog Enforcement Subcommittee to evaluate the effectiveness of commercial tagging systems and user compliance.

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.

Task 3.2.7 – Review and provide input on enforcement issues associated with American eel or other aquaculture proposals, including offshore aquaculture proposals.

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).

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.

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.

#### 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 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 – Publish a Habitat Management Series document on acoustics affecting fish habitat for ISFMP Policy Board review and acceptance. Identify a subsequent topic (e.g. climate change, sand mining, power plant impingement, innovative wetland restoration techniques).

Task 4.2.5 – Develop outreach materials on the benefits of habitat to fish productivity for non-technical audiences (stakeholders, media, general public).

#### 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 – Provide annual updates to the Policy Board on fish passage improvements and current issues including hydropower dam issues. States can use this information when leveraging partnerships to reduce passage impacts.

Subtask 4.3.4.2 – Maintain a coastwide list of passage project priorities.

Subtask 4.3.4.3 – Establish coastwide fish passage targets and add to diadromous species FMPs as amendments/addenda are developed.

Subtask 4.3.4.4 – Continue to 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 – 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 update the ACFHP website.

Subtask 4.3.5.2 – Coordinate the implementation of the 5-year ACFHP Conservation Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and 2-year Action Plan (2017-2018).

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 – Migrate the Species-Habitat Matrix into an online searchable format for reference and downloading.

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 as needed.

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 4.4.4 – Continue to update the habitat webpages and 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 – Identify important fish habitats for Commission-managed species, and include this information in the 2018 Habitat Management Series document on important habitats.

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

Task 5.1.7 – Participate in the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils Marine Resource Education Program.

Task 5.1.8 – Explore use of story mapping and photo journaling to better communicate science and management activities.

Task 5.1.9 – Solicit outside sources to develop short video clips of fisheries management and science activities.

Task 5.1.10 – Collaborate with NOAA Fisheries MRIP staff on communicating improvements to MRIP.

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

Task 5.2.1 – Publish and distribute 2017 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 2018 are Atlantic herring, Atlantic striped bass, horseshoe crab, northern shrimp, and summer flounder.

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 – Explore the use of quarterly, topic-driven webinars to engage and inform public about current activities (management, science, habitat, and data collection and management).

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 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.

Task 5.3.3 – Work with ASMFC technical staff to improve messaging and communication skills with media.

Task 5.3.4 – Work with ASMFC technical staff on developing written content that is targeted for non-technical audiences (stakeholders, media, and the general public).



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.

Task 5.4.4 – Update website to improve functionality and include new content on ACCSP, cobia, and fisheries management 101.

## **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 (MSA), 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 with Members of Congress and their staff.

Task 6.1.1 – Provide opportunities for in person Commissioner interactions with Members and 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 Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee
- Senate Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard Subcommittee of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee

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 state needs for federal dollars through social, economic, and ecological benefits.

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 Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act Grants, Stock Assessments line item, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, ACFHP, and Fisheries Information Networks). Seek funding for long-term monitoring surveys including Horseshoe Crab Benthic Trawl, NEAMAP, and SEAMAP (See Task 1.1.45).

Subtask 6.2.3.1 – Restore the Atlantic Coastal Act proportion of the “Regional Councils and Fishery Commissions” appropriation to its historic share.

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.

Subtask 6.2.5.1 – Seek federal funding support for Gulf of Maine lobster research to characterize impacts of environmental changes.

Task 6.2.6 – Contact home state Commissioners before communicating with Members of Congress 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 to provide unified positions on funding and legislative priorities to lawmakers and federal agencies, where appropriate.

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 Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act , Anadromous Fish Conservation Act , MSA, 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, including pending MSA reauthorization legislation.

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 the Atlantic Coastal Act 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.

Task 6.4.3 – Engage congressional delegations to ensure the transparency and integrity of the Atlantic Coastal Act provisions are preserved.

Task 6.4.4 – Engage Administration on policy and funding issues.

Subtask 6.4.4.1 – Communicate state and Commission funding needs to NOAA Fisheries.

Subtask 6.4.4.2 – Develop relationships with the Commerce Secretary and the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

Subtask 6.4.4.2.1 – Meet with Secretary of Commerce and staff to discuss Atlantic Coastal Act noncompliance process.

Subtask 6.4.4.3 – Work with NOAA Fisheries to fund state and regional fisheries programs.

Subtask 6.4.4.4 – Include Delaware Bay Horseshoe Crab Survey in the President’s Budget Request to Congress.

Subtask 6.4.4.5 – Increase funding for the Atlantic Coastal Act.

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.

## **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 the Administrative Oversight Committee (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 – Continue to provide administrative support to MRIP APAIS program, including human resources and meeting management, grant and financial monitoring, and office space.
  - Task 7.1.7 – Continue to provide administrative support to the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), including logistical support for committee meetings and other Partnership activities.
  - Task 7.1.8 – Review and revise Commission's retirement documents, as necessary, to ensure qualifications for participation in the plans are clearly and accurately defined.
  - Task 7.1.9 – Develop Commission compensation plan with updated job classifications and salaries based on location.
  - Task 7.1.10 – Annually review and revise 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 with a focus on training new staff on how to access and use electronic tools.

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.

Task 7.2.6 – Explore the use of available software packages to digitize review and approval of bills received by the Commission.

Task 7.2.7 – Develop a contracts database to track details of multiple Commission contracts.

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 – Review and revise position descriptions as necessary.

Task 7.3.3 – Review vacancy announcement distribution list and update as necessary.

Task 7.3.4 – Conduct introductory and advanced stock assessment methods training workshops (See Task 2.5.1).

Task 7.3.5 – Facilitate staff participation at national and regional conferences; provide professional training opportunities.

Task 7.3.6 – Conduct a training workshop for ASMFC technical staff on meeting facilitation to help enhance committee productivity and performance.

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

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 to meet individually with financial advisor to match financial goals with investment choices for retirement.

Task 7.3.10 – Engage consultant to better define Commission staff culture and improve staff feedback and performance reviews.

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

Task 7.4.1 – Develop a transition and orientation program to quickly provide background for new Commissioners.

Task 7.4.2 – Update, on an ongoing basis, the Commissioner Manual. Inform Commissioners when the update is substantial.

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

Task 7.5.3 – Continue to work with human resources attorney to ensure all human resources practices are consistent with states laws.

7.6 Develop 2019-2023 ASMFC Strategic Plan.

Task 7.6.1 – Engage Commissioners in identifying an approach to develop the next strategic plan.

Task 7.6.2 – Develop the next strategic plan and 2019 Action Plan.

## **Appendix 1 (New Goal 8) - 2018 Action Plan for the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)**

This plan is intended to provide guidance in achieving the goals of the ACCSP in FY2018 (March 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019). References within this plan are to the ACCSP 2014-2018 Strategic Plan.

### *Strategies to Achieve Goal*

- 8.1 Manage and expand a fully integrated data set that represents the best available fisheries data.

Task 8.1.1 – Continue to maintain and enhance current data warehouse feeds.

Task 8.1.2 – Initiate populating the biological tables in the Data Warehouse.

Task 8.1.3 – Initiate populating the bycatch data set in the Data Warehouse.

Task 8.1.4 – Monitor and adjust, based on feedback from the end users and research conducted by staff and the Information Systems Committee, the new query interface.

- 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.

Task 8.2.1 – Maintain and enhance, based on requirements from the program partners, the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS).

Task 8.2.2 – Conduct and enhance MRIP's Access Point Intercept Survey (APAIS) and other related recreational data collection and management systems.

Task 8.2.3 – Continue the collaborative SAFIS redevelopment process, with systems changes and updates consistent with plans developed in prior years.

Task 8.2.4 – Maintain and enhance, in accordance with end user requirements, the lobster trap tag database (LOBSTAH) system.

Task 8.2.5 – Continue to develop and deploy tablet and phone-based versions of SAFIS.

- 8.3 Explore the allocation of existing Program funds and work with partners to pursue additional funding.

Task 8.3.1 – Continue to manage the funding process in accordance with the Funding Decision Document.



Task 8.3.2 – Through the Operations Committee, continue to track performance of funded projects and revise processes as necessary based on constituent input.

Task 8.3.3 – Maintain strong executive leadership and collaborative involvement among partners at all committee levels.

Task 8.3.4 – Conduct biannual meetings of the Coordinating Council to provide executive level managers with the most up-to-date information and an opportunity to provide direct input into the Program.

Task 8.3.5 – Conduct regular meetings of the technical and policy level committees to review and modify technical standards and make policy recommendations to the Coordinating Council.

8.4 Monitor and improve the usefulness of products and services provided by the ACCSP.

Task 8.4.1 – Monitor metrics and distribute findings throughout year and within the ACCSP Annual Report. Metrics to include are the collection of system usage statistics, user surveys, and data load and availability statistics.

Task 8.4.2 – Maintain a clear line of communications between Program Staff and our constituents. Ensure there is a feedback loop to gauge the success of the Program in meeting the needs of its constituents.

8.5 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.

Task 8.5.1 – Continue established outreach processes, including 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 *ASMFC Fisheries Focus*, and the preparation and publication of the Annual Report.

Task 8.5.2 – 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.

Task 8.5.3 – 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.

8.6 Support nationwide systems as defined in the MSA.

Task 8.6.1 – Continue to participate in both the Fisheries Information System (FIS) and MRIP, providing resources as appropriate to the various committees of the programs.

Task 8.6.2 – In accordance with the MSA, provide data for the Atlantic coast to the FIS when requested.