



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

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American Lobster Assessment Indicates Record High Abundance for Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Stock & Record Low Abundance for Southern New England Stock

The 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report indicates the American lobster resource presents a mixed picture of stock status, with record high stock abundance and recruitment in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and Georges Bank (GBK), and record low abundance and recruitment in Southern New England (SNE). The GOM/GBK stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. GOM and GBK were previously assessed as separate stock units and are now combined into one stock unit due to evidence of seasonal migratory patterns and connectivity between the two areas. Conversely, the SNE stock is severely depleted with poor prospects of recovery, necessitating protection.

Stock Status

Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank

GOM/GBK stock abundance has increased since 1979 and at an accelerated pace since 2007. Recruitment and spawning stock abundance have remained high between 2008 and 2013. Current stock abundance is at an all-time high. Exploitation (fishing mortality) declined after 1979 until the mid-1990s and then remained stable with higher exploitation on males than females. Current exploitation rates remain on par with the 2008-2013 average.

Southern New England

SNE stock abundance increased from the early 1980s, peaked during the late 1990s, then declined steeply through the early 2000s to a record low in 2013. Both the assessment and peer review support the finding that the SNE stock is severely depleted. Declines in population abundance are most pronounced in the inshore portion of the stock where environmental conditions have remained unfavorable to lobsters since the late 1990s. The stock has collapsed and is undergoing recruitment failure. Despite attrition among the fleet and fewer traps fished for lobster, declines have continued. These declines are largely in response to adverse environmental conditions, including increasing water temperatures over the last 15 years combined with sustained fishing mortality.



continued, see AMERICAN LOBSTER on page 11

Upcoming Meetings

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

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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September 14 - 18

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Beach House Resort, 1 South Forest Beach Drive, Hilton Head Island, SC.

September 16 (10 a.m. - Noon)

ASMFC Coastal Sharks Technical Committee Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

September 17 (1 - 3:30 p.m.)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation Working Group Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

September 22 (1 - 5 p.m.)

ASMFC Northern Shrimp Section, Portsmouth Public Library, 175 Parrott Avenue, Portsmouth, NH.

September 29 - October 1

New England Fishery Management Council, Radisson Hotel, Plymouth Harbor, Plymouth, MA.

October 1 (1 - 3:30 p.m.)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation Working Group Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

October 6 - 8

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Doubletree Philadelphia Center City, 237 S Broad St., Philadelphia, PA.

October 15 (1 - 3:30 p.m.)

ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Allocation Working Group Conference Call; go to <http://www.asmfc.org/calendar/> for more details.

November 2 - 5

Joint Annual Meeting of the ASMFC & GSMFC, World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort, 500 South Legacy Trail, St. Augustine, FL.

December 1 - 3

New England Fishery Management Council, Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, ME.

December 7 - 11

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Doubletree by Hilton Oceanfront Hotel, 2717 W. Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, NC.

December 8 - 10

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, The Westin Annapolis, 100 Westgate Circle, Annapolis, MD.

2016

January 26 - 28

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, NH.

February 2 - 4

ASMFC Winter Meeting, The Westin Alexandria, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria, VA.

February 9 - 11

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, DoubleTree by Hilton New Bern-Riverfront, New Bern, NC.

March 7 - 11

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Westin Jekyll Island, 110 Ocean Way, Jekyll Island, GA.

April 12 - 14

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Montauk Yacht Club, Montauk, NY.

April 19 - 21

New England Fishery Management Council, Hilton Hotel, Mystic, CT.



Atlantic Striped Bass, America's Most Iconic Saltwater Fish: Sustainable and Good for the Economy

For many recreational anglers, professional chefs, and amateur cooks alike, Atlantic striped bass is the East Coast's most sought after fish. It is just as likely to be spotted at your neighborhood fish market as on the menu of the region's top restaurants. As steward of this iconic fishery since the enactment of the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act in 1984, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) takes very seriously its duty to sustainably manage one of America's favorite fish.

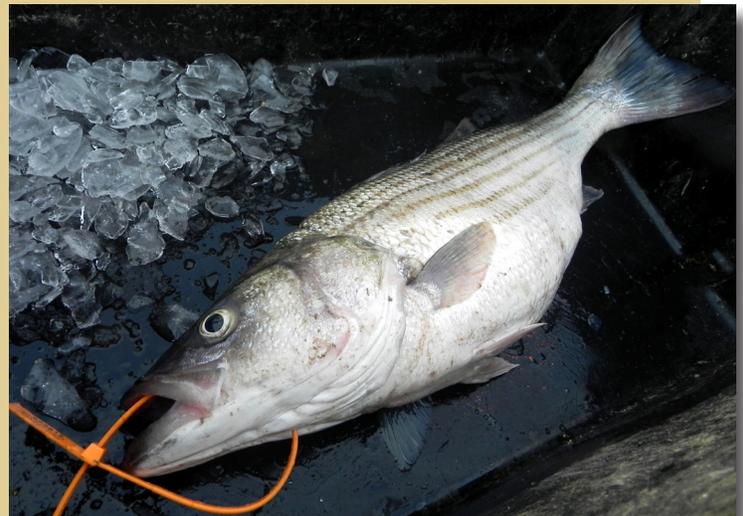
Recently, Atlantic striped bass management has come under criticism from a group of "celebrity" chefs. Some have even gone as far as pledging not to serve wild Atlantic striped bass in their restaurants. Atlantic striped bass are not overfished and are not experiencing overfishing. With strong management measures in place, consumers can be confident the Atlantic striped bass they catch and eat are sustainably managed.

As you may know, the United States imports up to 90% of its seafood every year. By buying and eating locally caught seafood like Atlantic striped bass, you are choosing a sustainable, environmentally responsible product that supports American fishermen and fishing communities. In addition, many foreign caught fish are subject to questionable fishing practices, unsustainable management, and health standards that may not meet U.S. guidelines. It is important to know where your seafood comes from, and with Atlantic striped bass, you can be confident it is harvested responsibly.

While the 2013 benchmark stock assessment indicated female spawning stock biomass (SSB) has declined, it remains above the threshold of 127 million pounds. This decline was primarily due to below average year class strength from 2004 to 2009. However, to reverse the downward trend and ensure the fishery remains sustainable, ASMFC initiated coastwide reductions in Atlantic striped bass harvest with a goal of protecting the strong 2011 year class and increasing SSB. In addition, recognizing the importance of forage fish to top predators like Atlantic striped bass, ASMFC is exploring ways to manage these fish (e.g. Atlantic menhaden) to address ecosystem functions, such as predator demands.

Moving forward, the Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board will meet in November to discuss the performance of the new management measures. Early signs indicate the 2015 year class may be above average and the reduction in fishing effort is on track to meet our goals. As we witnessed during the historic comeback of Atlantic striped bass in the 1980s, one or two strong year classes can make a remarkable difference in the overall population.

Even the strictest management measures are ineffective in the face of illegal sales of Atlantic striped bass. ASMFC significantly strengthened coastwide tagging requirements in 2012. A mandatory commercial tagging program for all states and jurisdictions with commercial Atlantic striped bass fisheries was instituted and many states ratcheted up penalties for illegally harvested fish. The tagging program includes standardization of tag type, timely catch reporting, strict accounting of unused tags, and the use of biological metrics for determining state/jurisdiction tag quantity. This action was based on the recommendations of a multi-year, multi-jurisdictional investigation on illegal commercial Atlantic striped bass harvest within Chesapeake Bay, which revealed some control measures for regulating the harvest of Atlantic striped bass were ineffective or inadequately designed to maximize compliance.



Today, all legally caught commercial Atlantic striped bass can be identified with a tag similar to the one shown in the accompanying photo. Chefs, restaurants, and anyone involved with the consumption of commercially-harvested striped bass have a unique opportunity to help reduce this illegal harvest by pledging to purchase only legally harvested fish and advertising this action in support of sustainable fisheries and the U.S. fishing industry.

Since the Atlantic states orchestrated the historic comeback of Atlantic striped bass beginning in 1984, sustainable management has always been goal number one. The public entrusted ASMFC to do the right thing with one of our coast's most valuable resources. ASMFC has responded by making tough choices to ensure Atlantic striped bass will be there for future generations while providing opportunities for today's fishermen and consumers.

Species Profile: Bluefish

2015 Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished and Not Experiencing Overfishing

Introduction

Bluefish are one of the most popular sport fish along the Atlantic coast. A highly mobile species, they are renowned for their predatory instinct, razor sharp teeth, and aggressive behavior. In the late 1970s, anglers petitioned the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to develop a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for bluefish to address concerns over population declines. The Bluefish FMP, passed in 1989, was the first management plan developed jointly by an interstate commission and regional fishery management council. Co-management is necessary because the fishery occurs in both state and federal waters.

Roughly a decade later, concern about the continued decline in bluefish abundance once again necessitated joint management action. By this time, a coastwide, collaborative research group had begun studying the dynamics of the coastal bluefish population to aid in management. Amendment 1 (1998) marked the start of a long-term plan to restore bluefish through progressive harvest restrictions. Since then, the bluefish population has slowly rebounded. In 2009, stock biomass exceeded its target level, and the stock was declared rebuilt a year earlier than planned.

In 2012, Addendum I established a coastwide sampling program to improve the quantity and quality of information available for use in future bluefish stock assessments. A benchmark stock assessment was conducted in 2015 which confirmed that bluefish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. Today, the Council and the Commission continue to cooperatively manage bluefish.

Life History

Bluefish are a migratory, pelagic species found throughout the world in most temperate, coastal regions, excluding the eastern Pacific. Bluefish migrate seasonally, moving north in spring and summer as water temperatures rise and moving south in autumn and winter to the South Atlantic Bight. During the summer, concentrations of bluefish are found in waters from Maine to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. In winter they tend to be found offshore between Cape Hatteras and Florida. Bluefish generally school by size, with schools that can cover tens of square miles of ocean, an area equivalent to around 10,000 football fields.

Bluefish are fast growers and opportunistic predators, feeding voraciously on almost any prey they can capture. Over 70 species of fish have been found in their stomach contents, including butterfish, mackerel, and lobster. Razor sharp teeth and a shearing jaw movement allow bluefish to ingest large parts, which increases the maximum prey size bluefish can catch. Bluefish live up to 12 years and may exceed 39 inches and 31 pounds.

Bluefish reach sexual maturity at age two and spawn offshore from Massachusetts through Florida. This species is iteroparous, meaning a single fish can spawn multiple times throughout its lifetime. Discrete groups spawn at different times and are referred to by the season in which they spawn: the spring-spawned cohort and the summer-spawned cohort. Recent research has also identified a fall-spawned cohort, demonstrating an expanded and prolonged spawning season. The cohorts mix extensively on the fishing grounds and comprise a single genetic stock.

Species Snapshot



Bluefish
Pomatomus saltatrix

Common Names:

Snapper, baby blues, choppers, elf, tailors

Interesting Facts:

- Widely distributed around the world in tropical and subtropical waters
- Voracious predators, known to be cannibalistic
- Fish exhibit a feeding behavior called the "bluefish blitz," where large schools of big fish attack bait fish near the surface, churning the water like a washing machine
- As in all extremely active predators, the digestive enzymes of bluefish are powerful and their meat will spoil quickly, so they need to be cooked soon after capture.

Largest & Oldest Recorded: 31 lbs., 12 oz.; 12 years old

Age/Length at Maturity: 2 years/14.9-20.1"

Age/Length at Recruitment: 1 year/9.3 - 11.1"

Stock Status: Rebuilt; not overfished and not experiencing overfishing



Photo (c) John McMurray, www.nyflyfishing.com.

Recreational & Commercial Fisheries

Bluefish support recreational and commercial fisheries along the entire Atlantic coast. The recreational fishery is most popular, accounting for approximately 80% of total removals in recent years. Anglers target bluefish near inlets and shoals that often hold large schools of bait, which attract bluefish into a feeding frenzy. The excitement involved in angling these aggressive fighters makes them the second most harvested species on the Atlantic coast, following Atlantic striped bass. According to the Marine Recreational Information Program, recreational harvest averaged 13.3 million pounds from 2010 to 2014. Catch and release is growing in popularity. From 1981 to 1985 only 18% of catch was released alive, while an average of 62% has been released alive from 2010 to 2014.

Commercial fishermen target bluefish using a variety of gears including trawls, gillnets, haul seines, and pound nets. Commercial harvest peaked in the 1980s, with the highest recorded harvest totaling over 16 million pounds (1981). Since then, landings have ranged from 14.5 - 5 million pounds. Currently, the commercial fishery is managed under a state quota system and yearly landings from 2010-2014 average 5.4 million pounds. Over the past decade, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia have landed the largest percentages of bluefish.

Status of the Stock

The most recent bluefish stock assessment was conducted in 2015 and peer reviewed by the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Review Committee. Through the monitoring provisions of Addendum I (2012), it was possible to significantly increase the amount and quality of age data, resulting in improved age-length keys and catch-at-age data compared to the last benchmark assessment. The model uses data from 1985-2014, including total catch in weight, catch-at-age, and indices of abundance to estimate fishing mortality, spawning stock biomass, recruitment, and total abundance. The new assessment indicates that bluefish are not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Fishing mortality was estimated to be 0.157 in 2014, below the mortality threshold of 0.190. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) was projected to be over 190 million pounds, which is 170% of its threshold but slightly under the target of 223 million pounds.

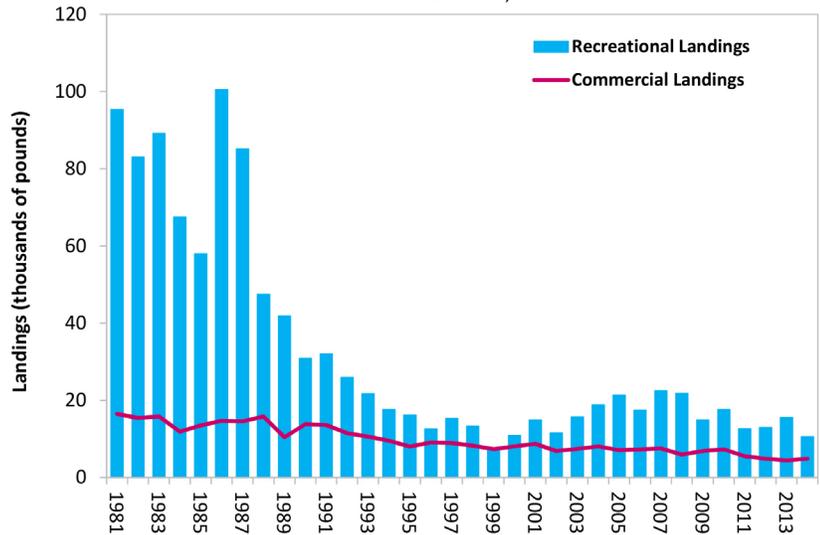
Atlantic Coastal Management

Bluefish is managed under Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Bluefish and Addendum I. Amendment 1 allocates 83% of the resource to recreational fisheries and 17% to commercial fisheries. However, the commercial quota can be increased up to 10.5 million pounds if the recreational fishery is projected to not land its entire allocation for the upcoming year. The commercial fishery is controlled through state-by-state quotas based on historic landings from 1981-1989, while the recreational fishery is managed using a 15 fish bag limit. A coastwide biological sampling program to improve the quantity and quality of information used in future bluefish stock assessments was implemented in 2012 through Addendum I.

The Commission and Council approved an acceptable biological catch limit of 19.45 million pounds for the 2016 fishing season, an approximate 10% decrease from 2015 levels, in response to the 2015 stock assessment. The 2016 commercial quota and recreational harvest limit will be set once the final recreational harvest estimates for 2015 have been released in 2016. For more information, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, FMP Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

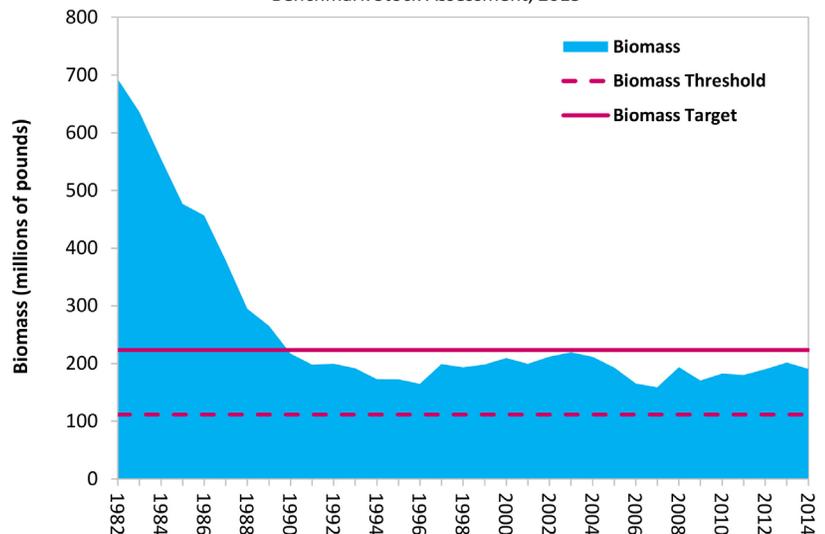
Bluefish Recreational and Commercial Landings

Source: Northeast Regional SAW/SARC Bluefish Benchmark Stock Assessment, 2015



Bluefish Biomass

Source: Northeast Regional SAW/SARC Bluefish Benchmark Stock Assessment, 2015



Timeline of Management Actions: FMP ('89); Amendment 1 ('98); Addendum I ('12)



November 2-5, 2015

**World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort
500 South Legacy Trail
St. Augustine, FL**

Preliminary Agenda

Please note: The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

8:00 – 10:30 a.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Discuss Management Response to the 2015 American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report
- Report from Subcommittee (Subset of Board, Lobster Conservation Management Team and Technical Committee Members) on the Southern New England Stock
- Technical Committee Report
- Discussion and Initiation of an Addendum to Set Effort Controls for Jonah Crab-only Trap Fishermen
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 American Lobster Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- Review and Consider Approval of Advisory Panel Membership

10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Atlantic Herring Section

- Set Fishery Specifications for 2016-2018
- Review and Consider Approval of Draft Amendment 3 for Public Comment

1:45 – 3:45 p.m. Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board

- Review Wave 4 Data (if available) for Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Recreational Harvest and Discuss Potential Implications for 2016 Management
- Consider Continuing the Ad-Hoc Approaches to Regional Management for Black Sea Bass
- Consider Approval of the Terms of Reference for the Black Sea Bass Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Review the 2015/2016 Black Sea Bass Quotas Based on the Outcome of the September 2015 Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Science and Statistical Committee Meeting
- Update Board on Scup Scoping/Public Information Document for Amendment
- Update Board on the Schedule of Assessment Updates for Summer Flounder and Scup

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Executive Committee (A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members only)

- Status Report (Program and Committee Updates)
- Independent Program Review Progress

- APAIS Update
- Governance Update
- Executive Committee Membership Standard Operating Procedures
- Recommendations from the Operations and Advisory Committees on Project Funding

4:00 – 5:30 p.m. ACCSP Coordinating Council

- Status Report (Program and Committee Updates)
- Independent Program Review Progress
- Governance Update
- Executive Committee Membership Standard Operating Procedures
- Recommendations from the Operations & Advisory Committees on Project Funding
- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Welcome Reception

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Executive Committee
(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members and Commissioners only)

- Review Guidance Documents
- Review Fiscal Year 2015 Audit

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Habitat Committee

- Discuss Improvements to Habitat Factsheet Content and Rollout
- Review 2015 Work Plan and Set 2016 Work Plan
- Discuss Progress on Fishery Management Plan Amendments, Habitat Bottlenecks White Paper, and Sciaenid Habitat Source Document

8:30 a.m. – Noon Joint Meeting of the SEAMAP-SA and GSMFC Crustacean Workgroups

10:15 – 11:15 a.m. American Eel Management Board

- Technical Committee Report on Maine's Life Cycle Survey Proposal
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 American Eel Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

11:30 a.m. – Noon Weakfish Management Board

- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Weakfish Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- Update on 2016 Benchmark Stock Assessment

Noon – 1:30 p.m. Legislators and Governors' Appointees Luncheon

1:30 – 3:00 p.m. Winter Flounder Management Board

- Review the Groundfish Assessment and Review Meeting Stock Assessment Update Results for the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Stocks
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Winter Flounder Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

3:15 – 5:45 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board

- Update on Working Groups' Progress for Ecosystem Management Objectives and Allocation

Public Comment Guidelines

With the intent of developing policies in the Commission's procedures for public participation that result in a fair opportunity for public input, the ISFMP Policy Board has approved the following guidelines for use at management board meetings:

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

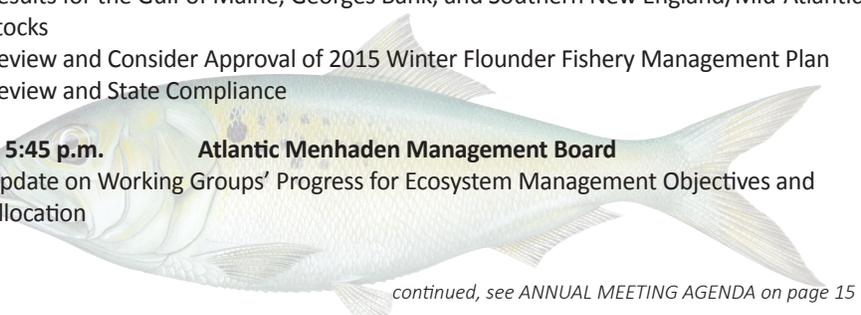
For topics that are on the agenda, but have not gone out for public comment, board chairs will provide limited opportunity for comment, taking into account the time allotted on the agenda for the topic. Chairs will have flexibility in deciding how to allocate comment opportunities; this could include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

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

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

1. Comments received 3 weeks prior to the start of a meeting week will be included with the main meeting materials.
2. Comments received by **5 PM Tuesday, October 27, 2015** will be distributed electronically to Commissioners/Board members prior to the meeting and a limited number of copies will be provided at the meeting.
3. Following the October 27 deadline, the commenter will be responsible for distributing the information to the management board prior to the board meeting or providing enough copies for the management board consideration at the meeting (a minimum of 50 copies).

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



continued, see ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA on page 15

Fishery Management Actions



Tautog PID Released for Public Comment

The Tautog Management Board is seeking public comment on the Public Information Document (PID) for Draft Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Tautog. The PID responds to the findings of the 2015 benchmark stock assessment which, unlike previous coastwide assessments, evaluated stock status regionally to reflect differences in life history characteristics and harvest patterns. Based on its endorsed regional approach, the assessment also recommended associated biological reference points to guide management at the regional scale. Since tautog are currently managed on a coastwide basis, the Board initiated the PID to consider a new regional management approach.

As the first step in the development of an amendment, the PID seeks to gather information concerning the tautog fishery and to provide an opportunity for the public to identify major issues and alternatives relative to the management of this species. Input received at the start of the amendment development process can have a major influence on the final outcome of the amendment. Issues presented in the PID include FMP goals and objectives, adaptive management, monitoring requirements and illegal fishing of tautog. In addition, in order to streamline the development of the plan amendment, the PID seeks specific input on the selection of regional stock areas for management use. The states of Massachusetts through Virginia have scheduled their hearings to gather public comment on the PID. The details of those hearings follow.

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

September 29 at 6:30 PM
Fairfield Inn & Suites
Vineyard Conference Room
185 MacArthur Drive
New Bedford, Massachusetts
Contact: David Pierce at 617.626.1532

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

September 30 from 6 – 9 PM
University of Rhode Island Bay Campus
Corless Auditorium
South Ferry Road
Narragansett Rhode Island
Contact: Jason McNamee at 401.423.1943

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

September 24 at 7 PM
CT DEEP Marine Headquarters
Boating Education Center (Rear Building)
333 Ferry Road
Old Lyme, Connecticut
Contact: David Simpson at 860.434.6043

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

October 1 at 6 PM
Bureau of Marine Resources
205 North Belle Mead Road
East Setauket, New York
Contact: Steve Heins at 631.444.0435

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

September 22 from 6:30 – 9:30 PM
Ocean County Administration Building
Public Hearing Room 119
101 Hooper Avenue
Toms River, New Jersey
Contact: Russ Allen at 609.748.2020

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

October 8 at 6 PM
DNREC Auditorium
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware
Contact: John Clark at 302.739.9914

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

October 7 at 5 – 6:30 PM
Ocean Pines Library Conference Room
11107 Cathell Road
Ocean Pines, Maryland
Contact: Michael Luisi at 410.260.8341

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

October 6 at 6 PM
2600 Washington Avenue, Third Floor
Newport News, Virginia
Contact: Rob O'Reilly at 757.247.2248

Fishermen and other interested groups are encouraged to provide input on the PID,

either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. The PID is available on the Commission website (www.asmfc.org) under Public Input. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on October 23, 2015** and should be forwarded to Ashton Harp, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite 200 A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at aharp@asmfc.org (Subject line: Tautog PID). For more information, please contact Ashton Harp, at aharp@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Jonah Crab Interstate FMP Approved

In August, the Commission approved the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Jonah Crab. The FMP implements a suite of measures to manage and monitor the Jonah crab resource for the first time along the U.S. Atlantic coast. The Plan limits participation in the trap fishery to only those vessels and permit holders that already hold an American lobster permit or can prove prior participation in the crab fishery. All other harvesters using non-trap gear must obtain an incidental permit. It also establishes a 4.75" coastwide minimum size and requires the landing of whole crabs, except for individuals from New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia who can prove a history of claw landings before the control date of June 2, 2015.



Photo (c) MA DMF

The FMP seeks to cap effort and protect spawning stock biomass in the absence of a range-wide stock assessment. The Plan was initiated in response to concern about increasing targeted fishing pressure for Jonah crab, which has long been considered a bycatch in the American lobster fishery. Since the early 2000s, growing market demand has increased reported landings by more than six-fold. The vast majority of Jonah crab are harvested by lobstermen using lobster traps. With the increase in demand for crab, a mixed crustacean fishery has emerged that can target lobster, crab or both at different times of year based on modifications to the gear and small shifts in the areas in which traps are fished. The mixed nature of the fishery makes it difficult to manage a Jonah crab fishery completely separate from the American lobster fishery without impacting the number of vertical lines and traps in state and federal waters. Furthermore, a lack of universal permitting and reporting requirements makes it difficult to characterize catch and effort to the full extent in order to manage the fishery. In federal waters, the crab resource is not directly regulated but rather is regulated incidentally by the American lobster regulations. Therefore, in the absence of a comprehensive management plan and range-wide stock assessment, increased harvest of Jonah crab may compromise the sustainability of the resource.

The FMP establishes commercial, recreational, and fishery-dependent monitoring measures for the Jonah crab fishery. In addition to the issues of minimum size, permitting, and crab part retention addressed above, the Plan also establishes a non-trap incidental bycatch limit of 200 crabs per calendar day, or 500 crabs per trip extending longer than one calendar day and prohibits the retention of egg-bearing females. For fishery-dependent sampling, the plan requires 100% harvester reporting and 100% dealer reporting with port and sea sampling. Jurisdictions that currently require less than 100% harvester reporter are required

to, at a minimum, maintain their current programs and extend them to Jonah crab. In the recreational sector, the FMP establishes a possession limit of 50 whole crabs per person per day. Finally, the FMP specifies that states whose commercial landings are less than 1% of the three-year coastwide average may qualify for *de minimis* status. *De minimis* states are not required to implement fishery-independent or port/sea sampling.

Since the fishery primarily occurs within federal waters, the Board has recommended that NOAA Fisheries implement the provisions of the Jonah Crab FMP in federal waters, pursuant to the NOAA's authority under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The New England Fishery Management Council, which will meet in the fall to set its management planning activities for 2016, will consider whether the development of a Council Jonah Crab FMP will be one of its priorities. Regardless of its decision, the Commission and its federal partners will continue to work closely on Jonah crab management.

The FMP, which will be implemented by June 1, 2016, will be available by the end of August via the Commission's website, www.asmf.org, on the American Lobster page under Fishery Management Plans. Upon recommending the FMP's final approval by the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board, the American Lobster Management Board agreed to move forward on the

development an addendum to identify management measures for crab-only trap fishermen (e.g., trap and landing limits). The Board will discuss the specific measures to be included in the addendum at its next meeting. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass & Bluefish Annual Specifications Approved

The Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) have established specifications for the summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish fisheries. The Commission's actions are final and apply to state waters (0-3 miles from shore). The Council will forward its recommendations for federal waters (3 – 200 miles from shore) to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

Summer Flounder

For summer flounder, both groups approved an acceptable biological catch (ABC) limit of 16.26 million pounds, an approximate 29% decrease from 2015. After accounting for projected discards in the commercial and recreational fisheries, this ABC is divided into a commercial quota of 8.12

continued, see FISHERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS on page 10

Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Specifications (2015 values are provided for comparison purposes). Please note specifications for years 2016 and beyond may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Summer Flounder	2015	11.07	14"	5.5"	7.38
	2016	8.12	14"	5.5"	5.42
	2017	7.91	14"	5.5"	5.28
	2018	7.89	14"	5.5"	5.26
Scup	2015	21.23	9"	5"	6.80
	2016	20.47	9"	5"	6.09
	2017	18.38	9"	5"	5.50
	2018	17.34	9"	5"	5.21
Black Sea Bass	2015	2.24	11"	4.5"	2.33
	2016	2.24	11"	4.5"	2.33
	2017	2.24	11"	4.5"	2.33

Fishery Management Actions (continued)

million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 5.42 million pounds for the 2016 fishing year. This decrease in catch and landings limits responds to the findings of the 2015 stock assessment update, which indicates that the summer flounder stock was experiencing overfishing in 2014. The fishing mortality rate in 2014 was estimated to be 16% above the fishing mortality threshold reference point. These results appear to be driven largely by below-average recruitment, as the assessment update indicates that the stock experienced four below average year classes from 2010 to 2013. The update also estimates that recruitment has been overestimated by a range of 22% to 49% for 5 of the last 7 year classes, which has contributed to an overestimation of stock size in recent years. According to the 2015 update, estimated biomass has been trending down since 2010.

Although reported landings have equaled or only slightly exceeded commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits in recent years, there is evidence of substantial illegal harvest in the form of unreported, underreported, or misreported landings. In 2013 and 2014, two separate investigations revealed that large quantities of summer flounder were being taken illegally under the guise of quota acquired through the Council's Research Set-Aside (RSA) program (the Council subsequently suspended the program in order to consider alternative cooperative research options). There may also be substantial non-RSA related illegal/unreported landings, although fewer details are available on the extent of unreported landings outside of the RSA program. While the exact amount of illegally harvested summer flounder is not known, the effect may have resulted in substantial overages of the fishery's annual catch limits (ACLs). For more information on the assessment update and its impacts on harvest limits for 2016, please see the Council's Summer Flounder Catch and Landings Limit Fact Sheet at <http://www.mafmc.org/s/Summer-Flounder-2016-Overview-8-6-15.pdf>.

Scup

For scup, the Commission and Council approved an ABC of 31.11 million pounds.

After accounting for projected discards in the commercial and recreational fisheries, this ABC is divided into a commercial quota of 20.47 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 6.09 million pounds for the 2016 fishing year. This represents a decrease from 2015 levels due to a slight decrease in spawning stock biomass (SSB) as projected by the 2015 benchmark stock assessment.

Black Sea Bass

For black sea bass, the Commission and Council approved an ABC of 5.50 million pounds. After accounting for projected discards in the commercial and recreational fisheries, this ABC is divided into a commercial quota of 2.24 million pounds and a recreational harvest limit of 2.33 million pounds for the 2016 and 2017 fishing years. Catch levels for 2016 and 2017 are unchanged relative to 2015 levels. Both the commercial quota and recreational harvest limit may be changed pending further review by the Council's Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) in September 2015. The next benchmark stock assessment is scheduled to be peer-reviewed through the Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee in late fall 2016.

Bluefish

For the bluefish fishery, the Commission and Council approved an ABC of 19.45 million pounds for the 2016 fishing season, an approximate 10% decrease from 2015 levels. The reduction responds to the findings of the 2015 benchmark stock assessment which lowered both the SSB target level (223 million pounds) and the SSB estimate (191 million pounds in 2014). The 2016 commercial quota and recreational harvest limit will be set once the final recreational harvest estimates for 2015 have been released in 2016.

For all four species, the Commission and Council actions are consistent with the Council's SSC recommendations regarding the level of total removals that cannot be exceeded based on the best available scientific information. For more information about the Commission's actions, please contact Kirby Rootes-Murdy, FMP Coordinator, at krootes-murdy@asmfc.org.

Scup Benchmark Stock Assessment Overview

This summer, the 2015 benchmark stock assessment for scup was peer-reviewed by the 60th Northeast Regional Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee (SAW/SARC). The assessment is the latest and best information available on the status of the coastwide scup stock for use in fisheries management.

What is the Status of the Stock?

In 2014, the scup stock was not overfished or experiencing overfishing relative to the new reference points defined in the 2015 assessment. Spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated at 403.6 million pounds, about two times the SSB target of 192.47 million pounds. Fishing mortality on age 3 fish and older in 2014 was estimated at 0.127, below the new fishing mortality threshold of 0.22.

Recruitment

Since 1984, recruitment (e.g., the number of fish entering the population) estimates have been mainly influenced by the fishery and survey catches-at-age. From 1884-2014, recruitment averaged 109 million fish. The 1999, 2006, and 2007 year classes are estimated to be the largest of the time series at 222, 222, and 218 million age 0 fish, respectively. Below average recruitment occurred in 2012 and 2013. The 2014 year class is estimated to be above average at 112 million age 0 fish.

Projections

Three-year projections of SSB and fishing mortality were made with the following assumptions: 75% of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) is caught annually (based on recent harvest patterns) and the current fishing mortality rate of 0.220 is maintained during 2016-2018. Under this scenario, the probability of the stock being overfished (SSB less than the SSB threshold) is unlikely.

For more information on the benchmark assessment go to <http://tinyurl.com/q5lpctr>.

AMERICAN LOBSTER continued from page 1

Declines in catch and fishery-independent survey indices in the offshore portion are evident as well; however, they are not as severe. It is believed the offshore area of SNE depends on nearshore larval settlement and offshore migration as the source of recruits (i.e., young of the year lobsters). Therefore, unless fishing effort is curtailed, the offshore component will be in jeopardy in the future when the poor year classes fail to materialize offshore. The Peer Review Panel noted while the SNE stock is not experiencing overfishing based on the current reference points, these reference points were established “without considering the possibility that the stock could be at the lowest abundance level ever and the production of recruits in the inshore area (on which the offshore area depends) could be brought to an extremely low level. It is noted that pre-recruits are not measured in the offshore surveys, so the effects of recruitment failure in the inshore would not be seen in the offshore until years later when the lobsters become available to the fishery and surveys. Hence, by any reasonable standard, it is necessary to protect the offshore component of the stock until increased recruitment can be observed.”

Peer Review Panel Recommendations

For SNE, the Panel recommends close monitoring of stock status, along with implementing measures to protect the remaining lobster resource in order to promote stock rebuilding. Stock indicators should be updated annually and reported to the Management Board for appropriate action. Given the good condition of the GOM/GBK stock, the Panel recommended stock indicators be monitored prior to the next benchmark assessment to detect signs of changing recruitment or other conditions.

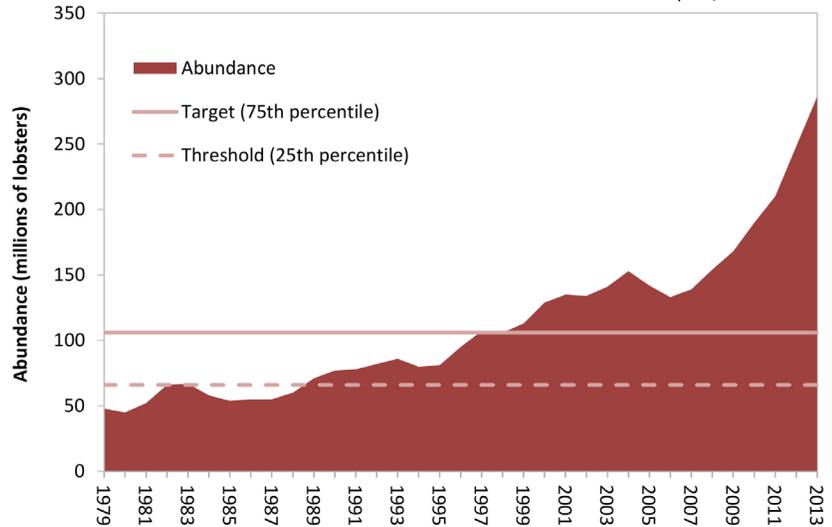
Landings

Total U.S. landings in the fishery have steadily increased in the past 35 years. Up until the late 1970s, landings were relatively constant at about 30.87 million pounds. However by 2000, landings almost tripled to roughly 86 million pounds and by 2006 grew to 92.61 million pounds. Landings in 2013 were roughly 149.94 million pounds. These landings are primarily comprised of catch from inshore waters (0 to 12 nautical miles). GOM supports the largest fishery, constituting approximately 76% of the U.S. landings between 1981 and 2007 and accounting for approximately 87% of landings since 2002. Landings in the GOM were stable between 1981 and 1989, averaging 32.13 million pounds, and then increased dramatically from 42.34 million pounds (1990) to 141.12 million pounds (2013). Landings averaged 112.46 million pounds from 2008-2013. GBK constitutes a smaller portion of the U.S. fishery, with

continued, see AMERICAN LOBSTER on page 14

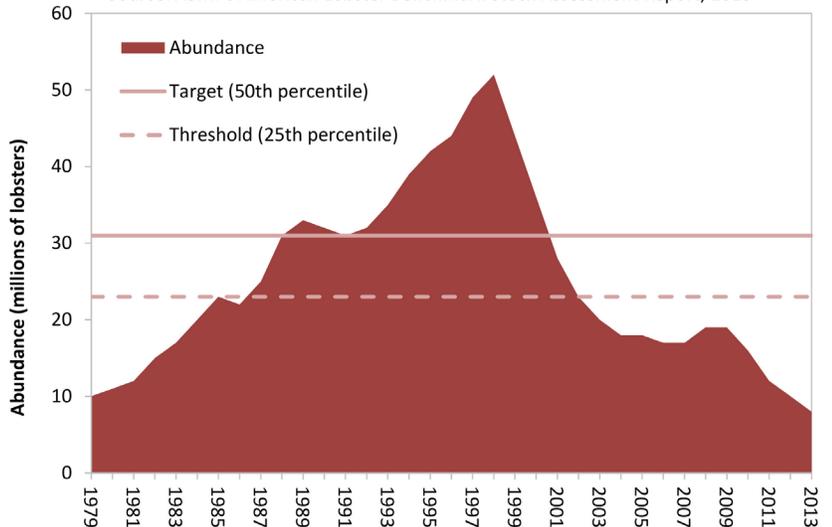
American Lobster Abundance for the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank Stock Unit

Source: ASMFC American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment Report, 2015



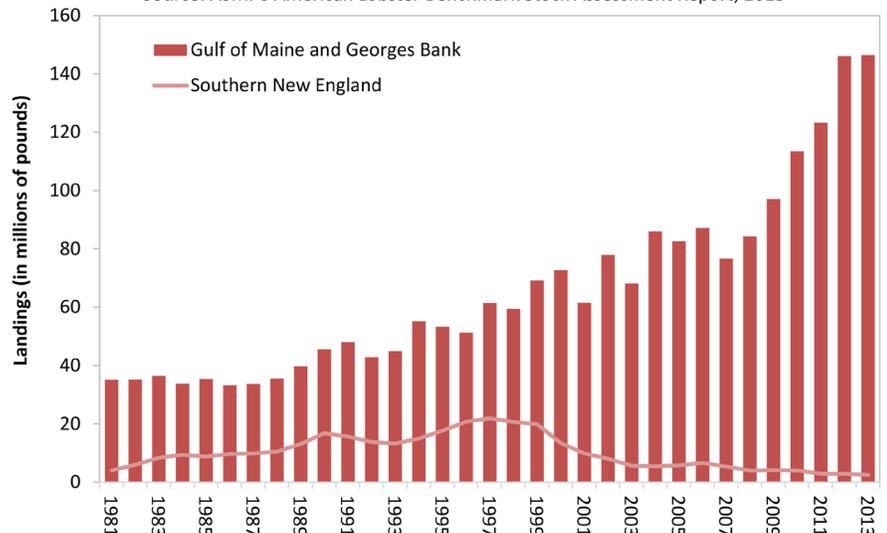
American Lobster Abundance for the Southern New England Stock Unit

Source: ASMFC American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment Report, 2015



American Lobster Landings by Stock Area

Source: ASMFC American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment Report, 2015



SAFIS Helps Improve Data Quality of RI Dealer Reporting

The Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife (RI DFW) has been a pioneer in improving harvester and dealer data and quota monitoring since 2003. The Rhode Island Fisheries Information System (RIFIS), which was created by the ACCSP staff and tested among a small group of Rhode Island dealers, became eDR (electronic dealer reporting) in 2004. This was the first application of the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS). By 2006, all Rhode Island dealers were reporting trip-level landings data in SAFIS. In the past 15 years, RI DFW has worked diligently to not only increase dealer entry, but also to improve data quality.

In 2010, a dealer report card was implemented to identify needed improvements in the data quality for an individual dealer. The report card is sent quarterly to dealers informing them of their data quality issues and highlighting topics such as timeliness of reporting (late reports), missing prices, missing vessel information, and missing fishermen information. In 2013, the report cards were improved to include grades to further demonstrate to the dealers their specific data quality issues. The report cards have greatly improved dealer reporting and RI DFW continues to utilize them. RI DFW staff also performs weekly checks of vessel and fishermen information in SAFIS to ensure they have the best available data for dealers when they upload purchases. Also, the hardworking staff participate in site visits and community outreach meetings when needed.

The improvements in the quality of data reported to SAFIS have remained constant in September 2013. The lag between purchase

date and entry date remained consistent with an average lag of about four days. RIDFW continues to use SAFIS dealer landings as the primary source for quota monitoring data. This data is used as the basis for changing possession limits and early seasonal closures for quota monitored species. SAFIS landings reports are run daily in order to accurately track quota managed species in Rhode Island. The preliminary landings for select quota monitored species are available on the RI DFW website at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/quttrck.htm>. Additionally, data requests of SAFIS dealer reports are processed frequently, with

harvesters, or anglers. Each of these applications function independently, but are kept in the same database and share ACCSP-compliant standards and codes. The applications include:

ELECTRONIC DEALER REPORTING (eDR):

eDR is a web-based application that allows dealers to enter an electronic dealer report. Fields that must be entered for a completed report include fisherman, port, date landed, time landed, date purchased, vessel number, species, disposition, gear, quantity, and price.

SINGLE TRIP TICKET DEALER REPORTING

(e-1Ticket): e-1Ticket is a web-based application providing the ability to collect trip/effort/catch data and simultaneously create a dealer report.

ELECTRONIC TRIP REPORTING

(eTRIPS): eTRIPS is a web-based application that compiles catch and effort data from fishermen. Trip reports, or log books in some fisheries, provide catch and effort data from a permitted fishing entity (fishermen or a vessel). Trips may be categorized as commercial or party/charter.

VOLUNTARY RECREATIONAL LOGBOOKS (eLogbook):

eLogbook is a web-based application that collects data from private recreational anglers on a voluntary basis. eLogbook formulates summaries of information on all species caught by the angler. This valuable tool is a way to provide narrow strategies for any given set of conditions and is a more efficient way for anglers to review past and current daily entries.

For more information about SAFIS, please visit: <http://www.accsp.org/safis.htm>.



many requests processed in support of ASMFC compliance reports and fisheries management plans, shellfish management, enforcement, and commercial fishing license tracking.

What is SAFIS?

SAFIS is a real-time, web-based reporting system for landings on the Atlantic coast. It has been used to collect over 56 million landings records since first being implemented by Rhode Island in February 2003. Currently, SAFIS has four applications available to dealers,



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

COMMISSIONERS

Doug Brady

In August, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory appointed Doug Brady to serve as the state's Governor Appointee to the Commission. A lifelong recreational fisherman and past owner and operator of a wholesale commercial seafood business for over 25 years, Mr. Brady has diverse experience in North Carolina's fisheries. His commercial fisheries background includes sales and marketing of seafood products as well as ownership and management of commercial fishing boats and a commercial aquaculture business. He has served on numerous commissions and boards at the county, state, and regional levels, including North Carolina Seafood Aquaculture Study Commission, North Carolina Seafood Industrial Park Commission, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and the Carteret County Economic Development Board, where he served as president. He has served as County Commissioner for 8 years and as Chair for 3 of those years. Currently, he is Vice-Chair of Carteret Health System and owner of a private real estate development and investment company.



Mr. Brady graduated from North Carolina State University with a degree in science/food science. Welcome aboard, Mr. Brady!

Bill Cole

In August, Bill Cole stepped down as North Carolina's Governor Appointee to the ASMFC, having served in that capacity since 2008. For the majority of his 40-year career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and into his retirement, Mr. Cole has been an active participant and ardent supporter of the Commission. Over that time, Mr. Cole served as a Commissioner, advisory panel member, and federal agency representative on several species management boards. Mr. Cole is also a charter member and passionate supporter of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program. In 2005, he received the Commission's Annual Award of Excellence for his numerous and outstanding contributions to the Commission's fisheries management and science programs.

Throughout his FWS career, Mr. Cole worked to protect, restore, and conserve fisheries resources and their habitats. In 1986, he helped establish the FWS South Atlantic Fisheries Coordination Office. He and others conceived of the Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise, which conducted its first survey in 1988, and has performed annual field tagging of Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, spiny dogfish, and other species that aggregate each winter in the coastal waters off Virginia and North Carolina. Its data have been critically important in advancing our understanding of fish survival and growth, habitat preferences, seasonal movements and migrations, and stock boundaries. Mr. Cole served as Chief Scientist for the Cruise for many years. We are grateful for Mr. Cole's contributions to the Commission and wish him only the very best.



Rep. Bob Steinburg

In August, Representative Bob Steinburg was appointed North Carolina's Legislative Commissioner to the ASMFC. Rep. Steinburg represents District 1, which includes Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Tyrrell Counties. He formerly served three terms as president of the 14-county Albemarle-Pamlico Republican Club and was nominated in 2011 to the North Carolina Republican Party's Hall of Fame for his years of service for conservative causes. He has served three terms as chairman of the Chowan County Republican Party and was honored as a delegate to the 2008 Republican National Convention in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota.



A retired businessman, Rep. Steinburg is devoted to helping others in his community. A committed advocate for North Carolina education, he dedicates himself to help prepare the next generation for the global job market. Rep. Steinburg served four terms as president of Edenton Emergency Aid, a not-for-profit-agency assisting individuals in Chowan County who are experiencing temporary financial hardship. He also co-chaired the 2010 Edenton Historical Commission's Taste of Edenton, which raised funds for the town's historic preservation initiatives. Having spent his entire adult life in business working primarily in sales and marketing for national companies, Rep. Steinburg received an associate's degree in retail business management from Corning Community College and a bachelor's degree from Upper Iowa University, majoring in business administration. Welcome aboard, Rep. Steinburg!

STAFF

Kristen Anstead



In August, Kristen Anstead joined the Commission as its new Stock Assessment Scientist. Kristen will be responsible for coordinating the Commission's fish ageing program as well as providing analytical support on upcoming benchmark stock assessments for Atlantic sturgeon, Atlantic croaker, and weakfish. Kristen has a Ph.D. in Oceanography from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia and a Bachelor of Science from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. For her doctoral research project, Kristen evaluated the spatial structure and recruitment of the Atlantic menhaden population using otolith chemistry approaches. Since 2013, Kristen has been the Science Editor for the American Fisheries Society *Fisheries Magazine*. Welcome aboard, Kristen!

Rachel Foster



In early September, Rachel Foster joined the Commission as its Human Resources Manager. In her new position, Rachel will be

continued, see COMINGS & GOINGS on page 14

Amy Hirrlinger Named Employee of the Quarter

Amy Hirrlinger came to the Commission last summer as an intern but was soon hired as a fulltime employee because of her positive attitude, quality of work, and willingness to contribute to any project. In the year that she has been here, she has improved the accuracy and functionality of our meetings and membership database; assisted in the preparation of species fishery management plan (FMP) reviews, public comment summaries, and newsletter articles; and helped to develop comprehensive standard operating procedures for the Commission's Finance and Administration Department. In recognition of her accomplishments, Amy was named Employee of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2015.

With interests in environmental management and population dynamics, Amy has been a huge asset to the Commission staff. She has assisted FMP Coordinators in the development of FMP reviews and annual compliance reports; helped draft the first interstate FMP for Jonah crab; and summarized hundreds of submitted comment on Atlantic Striped Bass Addendum IV. She has researched and written newsletter articles on the blue catfish invasion and fish passage technologies, and drafted species profiles for Jonah crab, Atlantic menhaden, and bluefish. Working with our IT staff and ACCSP programmers, she has made significant improvements to the Commission's meetings and membership database, which is the foundation for all of the Commission's



meetings, travel authorizations and reimbursements, and communications via email and regular mail. She has sought ways to reduce mailing costs through increased efficiencies and by transitioning recipients to email delivery versus snail mail.

Constantly seeking new challenges and opportunities to grow professionally, Amy volunteered to participate on the Gulf of Maine Northern Shrimp Trawl Survey and has been taking the Commission's Beginner Stock Assessment Training Workshop. She has also begun

working on a couple of outreach related activities, creating short video clips on fisheries management and science topics as well as helping to update the Commission's historical publication *Forging Knowledge into Change*, which was released in honor of the Commission's 50th anniversary and is being revised for our upcoming 75th anniversary.

In all that Amy does, she brings her intelligence, inquisitiveness, sunny disposition, and strong work ethic. She is a great coworker and true pleasure to work with. Amy has a Bachelor of Science in Biology with Ecology focus and a Minor in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Pennsylvania State University. As Employee of the Quarter, she received a cash award, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personnel record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of the Quarter plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Amy!

ASMFC COMINGS & GOINGS continued from page 13

responsible for coordinating the Commission's human resources activities, including ensuring compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. Rachel is currently completing her Master in Business Administration from Virginia Tech and has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Christopher Newport University in Newport News, VA. Rachel comes to us from General Dynamics, where she assisted in the administration of HR activities for over 500 employees. Welcome aboard, Rachel!

Atlantic Coast Fisheries News
a collection of upcoming meetings, recent news alerts, and articles of interest from Atlantic coast states, regional fishery management councils, and federal agencies

Interested in receiving weekly updates on upcoming meetings, recent news alerts, and articles of interest from ASMFC, ACCSP, Atlantic coast states, regional management councils, and federal agencies? Sign up for *Atlantic Coast Fisheries News* at <http://tinyurl.com/nokysl>.

AMERICAN LOBSTER continued from page 11

landings averaging 4.93 million pounds between 2008 and 2013. Like the GOM, landings were stable in the 1980s and then quickly doubled in the early 2000s to a high of 5.29 million pounds in 2005. Before 2011, SNE was the second largest fishery, accounting for 19% of the U.S. landings between 1981 and 2007; however, a sharp decline in the population has significantly reduced catch. Landings peaked in the 1990s, reaching a high of 21.91 million pounds in 1997. Since this time, landings have precipitously dropped to a low of 3.31 million pounds in 2013.

The Board accepted both the stock assessment and peer review report for management use. In response to the findings regarding the status of the SNE stock, the Board established a working group of Board and Technical Committee members to review the assessment and peer review findings and develop recommendations for Board consideration. The final report is available at www.asmfc.org on the American Lobster page under Stock Assessment Reports. For more information, please contact Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, at mware@asmfc.org.

Annual Meeting Agenda (continued)

3:15 – 5:45 p.m. Atlantic Menhaden Management Board (continued)

- Discuss Allowance of Cast Nets Under the Bycatch Provision of Amendment 2
- Provide Guidance to Plan Development Team on the Development of the Public Information Document for Draft Amendment 3

6:30 – 9:30 p.m. Annual Dinner

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Review 2015 Stock Assessment Update and Projections on Reaching Coastwide Fishing Mortality Target with Addendum IV Regulations
- Technical Committee Report on Coastwide and Fleet-specific Fishing Mortality Reference Points

8:30 a.m. – Noon Law Enforcement Committee

(A portion of this meeting may be a closed session for Committee members, authorized law enforcement personnel, and LEC Coordinators only)

- ISFMP Species Board Issues
- Federal and State Agency Reports
- Discussion of Atlantic Striped Bass Compliance Report Needs for 2016
- Review 2015 Action Plan Completion and 2016 Action Plan Items
- Closed Session (as needed, to discuss ongoing enforcement activities)

10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Tautog Management Board

- Review Public Comment on the Public Information Document to Draft Amendment 1
- Provide Guidance to Plan Development Team on the Development of Draft Amendment 1
- Review and Consider Approval of Advisory Panel Membership

12:15 – 1:45 p.m. ASMFC Captain David H. Hart & GSMFC Lyles-Simpson Awards Luncheon

1:45 – 5:45 p.m. Joint Meeting of the ASMFC Law Enforcement and the GSMFC Law Enforcement Advisory Committees

1:45 – 2:45 p.m. Business Session

- Review and Consider Approval of 2016 Annual Action Plan
- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
- Review Non-compliance Findings (if necessary)

2:00 – 6:00 p.m. Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Steering Committee

- Discuss Outcomes of the Recent Science and Data Committee Meeting and Next Steps for the Steering Committee
- Receive Updates on the Implementation Plan
- Discuss Potential Goals and Objectives for Next Conservation Strategic Plan
- Approve FY2016 Projects for Recommendation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Coastal Sharks Management Board

- Set 2016 Specifications Based on Federal Quotas (if available)
- Update on NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Amendment 6 Final Rule and Draft Amendment 9
- Review and Consider Approval of 2014 Coastal Sharks Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Spiny Dogfish Management Board

- Set Specifications for Spiny Dogfish
- Review and Consider Approval of 2014 Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance

continued, see ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA on next page

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ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA continued from page 11

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee Report
 - Shorebird and Horseshoe Crab Survey Reports Summary
 - Adaptive Resource Management Framework Harvest Output for 2016
- Set Specifications for the 2016 Delaware Bay Fishery
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Horseshoe Crab Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- Update on the Virginia Tech Horseshoe Crab Trawl Survey

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. ACFHP Steering Committee (continued)

9:15 – 11:15 a.m. Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board

- Atlantic Sturgeon Stock Assessment Update
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Atlantic Sturgeon Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance Report
- Habitat Committee Report
- Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Report
- Law Enforcement Committee Report
- Management and Science Committee Report

11:15 – 11:45 a.m. Business Session (if necessary)

12:15 – 1:45 p.m. South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board

- Update on 2015 Red Drum Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Spotted Seatrout Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- Review and Consider Approval of 2015 Spanish Mackerel Fishery Management Plan Review and State Compliance
- Discuss Black Drum Compliance Report Deadline

